

LD 178 - An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Al Cleveland and I am a resident of Portland. I urge you to support LD 178 and re-establish parole in Maine.

I am here today because I believe that people can be changed by taking accountability for harm they cause. I want real public safety in Maine and I know that building accountable relationships is the way to get there. Life and long-term sentences, where incarcerated people are never able to reintegrate back into the community, are denying our state's ability to heal. Parole offers a chance for incarcerated Mainers to show their transformation to the people they harmed, their community, and their loved ones. Parole gives incarcerated people the ability to build the accountable relationships that we need to be safe.

Taxpayers are paying for the inability of state leaders to create pathways for personal rehabilitation and transformation. Parole is far less expensive than the current cost of incarceration and sets people up to get the supports they need to thrive when back in the community. The saving costs can be spent on community services and move people away from the legal system.

I have multiple friends serving decades long sentences. Their time incarcerated will take over the majority of their lives and will be removed from family, friends, and community. I've watched their spirits and dreams be crushed. I have watched them be failed by poverty, the housing crisis, and a poor healthcare system. I have watched them take every opportunity to be accountable but their actions are limited because of being locked up.

Maine's correctional system does very little to protect us from harm; it never gets to the root causes of why people end up inside. Re-enstating parole brings hope. It brings the possibility of true justice that cannot exist when someone is behind bars but through accountable relationships.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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