

Maine State Prison

March 13, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Paul Schlosser, I have less than six weeks left until my release. Some of you may ask yourselves, "Why is he even up here talking, parole doesn't even pertain to him?" I would have to respectfully disagree, because the majority of my friends are doing bids right now who's future consists of being buried in a plot in the graveyard for residents who die here with no one to claim their remains. I see their faces when they talk about missing a child's birthday or a high school graduation. Missing anniversaries with wives, I hear a lot about. But the worst is hearing about deaths in their family, especially the death of a child, and the grief these men go through. Then they find out they might not be able to go to the service, and grieve with their family... You cannot console such a man.

I am a veteran of the US Army, and in war, you may see arms and legs ripped right from their sockets or maybe even some decapitations, but there is nothing like the site of an amputated spirit, there is no prosthetic for that. Some of the residents walk around and look like they're simply going through the motions with no clear direction or purpose. They are merely existing. But, I also know quite a few that are going to school, earning degrees, and doing whatever they can to better their lives. I once asked a resident, "With all due respect, why are you earning a degree when you are not getting out? It just seems waste of time."

He stated quite emphatically, "I'm one of the many lifers hoping to one day get the opportunity to use my skills on the outside and have a job that I can be proud of while raising my family...if they were to bring back parole in Maine."

I then understood where the passion and hope come from ... the possibility that he could be reunited with his family on the outside and live a life again where he could be a father, a husband, a son, but most of all, a human being; where he could be treated with the dignity and respect he deserves like everyone should be.

I know recidivism unfortunately occurs, but as a man of faith I can honestly say that almost all of the long timers I talk to, if given the chance, would live a life that would make a saint proud. "if I could turn back time" or "if I just had a second chance," are phrases I hear that break my heart. I pray those that are here to listen to the stories understand that we are all human, therefore, fallible. All of mankind fall short of the glory of God.

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown, but I ask that you do not be uneasy. These long timers absolutely without a doubt deserve a second chance. I know that a parole hearing is not as simple as going in and saying "I miss my family can I please go home. I promise to be good." Unless you are Red during his last parole hearing in Shawshank Redemption, you must prove to the board why you deserve a second chance. In bringing back parole, you would give some decency and humanity to those working their tails off in here for the hope of one day getting that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Paul Schlosser