

PO Box 360
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March 13, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Jan Collins, I live in Wilton and I am here in support of LD 178 and parole, as well as to speak to you as a victim of crime.

As a child I witnessed my father severely beat and kick my mother. I never stopped loving my Dad and wanting him to be all the things I dreamed he would be.

As a high school science teacher I was assaulted in my classroom. I wish I had handled it differently.

I lost a grandchild to domestic violence, three days after child protective had visited the home and declared it safe...**how my heart aches.**

What do victims want? We want the pain to go away and we also know that it never will.

We want to feel safe and we know safety will depend on the **redemption, rehabilitation, and transformation** of the person who harmed us.

We want a justice system that **heals**, not harms.

When I was assaulted in my classroom, the student who assaulted me in front of her classmates was newly eighteen. The DA decided to make an example of her, because hers had been the second assault in the school system that year. She would go to jail for a month. She would lose her job, her vehicle, and her opportunity for graduation. She would have a criminal

record for the rest of her life, difficulty getting a job, and finding housing. She would likely live in poverty and any children she has will also live in poverty...starting the cycle all over again. Not a month in jail, but a life sentence that would make our communities less safe, not more.

And what of me, did the legal system care about me. Did it arrange support services? Did it create a space for healing between me and the student? Did it arrange counseling for the students who witnessed the attack? If we care about victims we would do all of these things, but we don't. Our legal system is more about punishment than about healing.

I, like 3 out of 4 victims, prefer holding people accountable through options beyond prison, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, restorative justice or community service.

There is much talk about honoring victims in this discussion of parole. But it is a highly stereotypical version of a victim as an angry vindictive person who wants endless punishment. And yes, there are people who fit that description. But, if you are choosing to vote against parole today or any other day, please do not do it my name.

And if you do choose to vote in favor of parole please do it in my name and the majority of victims who choose healing.

Thank-you,
Jan M. Collins
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