

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 Jonathan Chevrier MDOC# 67945, I am a resident in the Maine State Prison (Warren) and was sentenced to 13 years in 2015 for Aggravated Assault. Prior to my incarceration I served 10 years in the U.S. Army deploying to Iraq and the greater Middle East. When I came home from my last deployment, I was a lost & broken soul. There was no reintegration offered to soldiers returning to civilian life. Returning to civilian life was very difficult trying to relate with others left me feeling uncomfortable. I found myself secluded in my apartment avoiding any type of social interaction. Fortunately, I had friends help get me on my feet. I started commercial fishing again Lobstering in the summer months and Scalloping in the winter. It had been such a long time since I had been out on the water. Heading out through the Bay of Fundy passing West Quoddy Head to the fishing grounds, such a beautiful sight brought me peace. Unfortunately, it was short lived. It's well known that fishing is extremely taxing on the body I began having severe lower back pain. At first, I treated the pain as typical due to the fact that it comes with the job and drank Vodka to dull the aggravation. This soon transitioned to taking Oxycodone & Oxycontin. My job as a fisherman no longer supported my family it supported my drug habit. With the fishing season short I soon found myself with no job, no money saved as I always had done in the past to get my family through until it was time to prep traps, set them and haul in the first catch. My mind was elsewhere the only thing that mattered was getting a fix. I used poor excuses such as "I'm in pain" to use but it had gone way past that soon turned to Heroin. I begged, stole and barrowed from anyone become delusional, impulsive and selfish to the point that I drove away everyone including my fiancé and 15-month-old daughter.

Four months later I did the unthinkable. I hurt my best friend, the mother of my child and an innocent man. I was arrested and taken to jail facing Attempted Murder charges, something I never would have thought possible. I broke the sacred oath to protect them from all enemies foreign and domestic. I had become that enemy, the thought of suicide soon crossed my mind. I arrived here at the Maine State Prison a broken shell, only pieces of the man I once was existed.

The first few years of my sentence were nothing short of a downward spiral. I masked denial with substance abuse, lashed out against many with violence and disrespected staff with no remorse. After 21 months in segregation and continuous talks with *Peer-Facilitators* I began to put in the work. I utilized their teachings, dedication and desire to help others. Most importantly their compassion to help fellow residents such as myself. These men believed in me and helped me find the courage to once again believe in myself. I initiated contact with the Veterans Administration in 2016 and was later diagnosed with: Combat PTSD with Substance Abuse (Heroin/Alcohol), Radiculopathy L&R lower extremity, Severe Spinal Stenosis with Herniation of the L-2/L-3 vertebrae. Resulting in 100% service connection, Permanent and total disability. After being awarded this entitlement I took the necessary

steps to ensure that my children receive the proper apportionments allotting them financial support throughout my incarceration.

It has been 9 long years since I committed those horrible crimes and hurt the people most precious to me. I am so very sorry for what I did. I have taken responsibility for my actions and continue to take classes to better myself and grow an individual. Currently I reside in the *Veterans Pod* here at MSP where I train service dogs for fellow disabled veterans. I have been sober for 19 months, completed 28 Peer-Facilitated courses ranging from Anger mgmt., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Substance Abuse, Family Violence, Inside/Out Dads & Veteran Peer Support. I recently completed the Maine Apprenticeship Program under which I will receive certification as an animal trainer/Service Dogs. I'm currently enrolled in the NCCER program and will be starting Welding 1 certification in the spring. I have been inspired and so positively affected by the work of the *Peer-Facilitators* in this prison that I have submitted an application to DHHS for certification as an (*Intentional Peer Support Specialist*) so that I can help men and women before they make a life altering decision leading to incarceration. I am pleased to tell you that my application was accepted and I begin training in April 2023.

I would like to thank the following Residents:

. Leo ~~Hilton~~ . Steve Clark . Ryan Hopkins
. Daniel Fortune . John Turner . Matthew Davis
. Jeffrey Legasse . Brad Chesnel . Earl Bieler

These are a few of the men responsible for my success and the success of so many others. Their hard work, ambition and dedication to rehabilitation of themselves and others reflects greatly on selfless service, integrity and self-transformation. The positive impact these men have had on my intellect has given me the courage to face my biggest fears, to believe in myself once again and to write this letter to you today. These men didn't know me, but they gave me a chance, invested their time and brought meaning back into my life.

Representative Faulkingham I'm not asking you for mercy, I don't deserve it, but would be grateful for it none-the-less. What I am asking is for you and your continuance to view myself and the men behind these concrete walls as "Good men" that somewhere down the road lost their way. Every day I wake up and pray that I'll be given the opportunity to prove myself worthy of a second chance as a father, a proud son of a loving mother and if possible, forgiveness.

Within this prison I have gained the necessary tools to be a successful, productive member in today's society. The residents serving a 25 year or life sentence are the men making it possible for individuals like myself and many others to succeed. In order to help others change you must first change yourself. These men have done just that, I also believe that I to have "Changed" for the better. This is why I believe Maine needs to bring back the Parole system. I invite you sir to come visit the Maine State prison so that you can witness first hand the magic happening here, Its nothing short of a miracle.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, happy holidays and God bless you sir.

Respectfully Yours;

Jonathan Chevrier
December 2nd, 2022