



mainepisoneradvocacy.org
Maine 04252

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC)
PO Box 446 Lisbon

To: Committee Members for Criminal Justice
From: Joseph Jackson: MPAC Executive Director
Re: letter in support LD 1514

04/23/2023

Senator Anne Beebe-Center
Representative Suzanne Salisbury
Honorable members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

My name is Joseph Jackson, and I'm the Executive Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC). I am also a formerly incarcerated individual who spent twenty years within the Maine Department of Corrections. I am here to testify in favor of bill LD 1514 "An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities".

This Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities will finally address one of the drivers of recidivism.

In my experience, it takes a long time to reestablish oneself after reentry. There are barriers to self sufficiency. A felony conviction exposes formerly incarcerated individuals to a lifetime of sanctions that impacts where you live, and where you work.

The practice of incarcerating individuals until their sentences are complete has resulted in too many individuals being released homeless. Those deemed indigent are provided fifty dollars upon release and advice to never return.

The practice of releasing individuals without ensuring access to stable housing places hardships on returning citizens. Most folks that enter the prison system lose everything when they enter. Their housing, their employment, transportation and clothing are all gone.

The high cost of rent and the practice of requiring a deposit along with first and last month's rent virtually eliminates access to stable housing for many when they are released.

The lack of stable housing places a great deal of stress on individuals seeking successful reentry transition. It places many of these individuals in desperate situations, and many fall back into survival patterns. It is no surprise that the lack of access to stable housing is a primary characteristic of Maine's high recidivism rate.

Recently, the Tennessee Department of Corrections started a program to provide 3 months of rent for incarcerated individuals deemed indigent after noting the data that suggest poor outcomes of successful reentry transition for these individuals.

The act to guarantee stable housing for returning citizens has benefits for individuals and the public. Stable housing provides safety for individuals and the public. It provides returning citizens with some time to find employment, and get some paychecks under their belts to increase the likelihood of successful transition.

We must end the practice of incarcerating individuals and simply releasing them when their sentences are complete without support. This act to guarantee Stable housing for newly released individuals means that we recognize that the way we do things now is requiring formerly incarcerated individuals to achieve the impossible.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Joseph N. Jackson : Executive Director
Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition
Maine Inside Out: Manager of Community Programs.
Maine Youth Justice: Campaign Advisor
3 Angel Street Lisbon Falls Maine 04252
jackson.joseph1966@gmail.com
2078441470