

Nicole Lemay

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

I am writing to support the passing of LD1633. I am a formally incarcerated person who was recently released on Maine's supervised community release program. I am grateful for this program because it has allowed me to participate in my college graduation and reintegrate into my community with the support needed.

I was released with a case plan that explained my low case management needs. While incarcerated, I built support, furthered my education, and developed skills within my community before release. I benefit from community members and peer support from inside MDOC. Without this support, I do not feel that I would thrive in the community I was released in. Connection to people who support me, value me, and relate to the struggles of reentry is what helps me navigate a world that feels foreign to me. This level of peer support would be beneficial to anyone released from MDOC custody.

The reentry planning in Maine is supposed to begin nine months prior to a resident's release date. This is not always the case. MDOC case managers have high caseloads, and many residents are unable to advocate for their own needs. Despite MDOC's best efforts, many people are left scrambling for support prior to release. Supporting LD 1633 would help build a multi-dimensional plan that benefits all parties involved. Having these supports may help prevent recidivism, which as we all know, is a problem in Maine. Developing safety plans and support would also save lives. Substance use continues to be a leading killer in our communities. Ld1633 would offer a higher-level of support that is individualized to each person. Please consider this bill, on behalf of Maine communities and those who are working towards living a high functioning life once again.

Respectfully, Nicole Lemay