



The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

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**Testimony of Andrea Mancuso, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Neither for Nor Against LD 1633: “An Act to Establish a Community-based Reentry Program
in All Department of Corrections Facilities”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Tuesday, April 25, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ to raise issues for your consideration regarding LD 1633, “An Act to Establish a Community-based Reentry Program in All Department of Corrections Facilities,” and to suggest some minor language modifications consistent with the intent of this bill.

Building a transparent reentry planning structure that will help support incarcerated individuals successfully re-integrate into the community, with the input and collaboration of a wide range of community partners, will be a net positive to the safety of crime victims and our communities. We see this as also likely to enhance the State’s ability to meaningfully support any increase in residents released under Maine’s Supervised Community Confinement Program as that program continues to grow and evolve.

Our network appreciates that this bill would require an individualized plan for each resident who will be released and includes attempting to address housing needs, employment opportunities, connections to pro-social activities, peer support and substance use recovery. These are all critical components to help any person be successful upon their release from a correctional facility. However, there are several other important risk-related issues that require attention and planning, and we would urge you to explicitly name them as requirements in both the pre-release planning and the post-release follow-up in order to support reintegration. These include:

- identifying possible access to firearms by a participant who will leave the facility as a prohibited person and helping the participant’s primary community supports understand those prohibitions;

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of the eight regional domestic violence resource centers across Maine as well as the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence and their children in our state.

- identifying and reviewing any protection from abuse or other victim-related court orders in place and ensuring the participant's release plan supports compliance with those; and
- connecting the resident to any violence intervention program that might be appropriate to supporting behavior change.

Without these things properly accounted for, particularly for those incarcerated for crimes involving domestic violence, the release plan fails to pay actual attention to some of the most significant risks that person poses. To that end, ***we would ask you to consider the following amendments:***

In Section 2 of the bill, adding two subsections to Section 1(3)(C)(2):

(f) identification of any anticipated access to firearms when the participant will be legally prohibited from possession of firearms upon their release and coordination of information sharing with the participant's primary community-based supports regarding this prohibition; and

(g) plans for compliance with any protection from abuse or other court orders that may be related to any victim of the crime for which the participant is incarcerated, as well as connection to any community-based domestic violence intervention program where appropriate."

In Section 2 of the bill, adding a subsection to Section 4(A):

(5) where the participant is prohibited from possession of firearms, identify any known access to firearms and confirm the participant's primary community-based supports are informed regarding the participant's prohibition on possession of firearms.

Section 3 of the bill creates a Peer Reentry Review Board, comprised of a cross section of interested parties, tasked with oversight, advising and evaluation around this community-based reentry program. MCEDV appreciates that the bill explicitly names two representatives from statewide victim advocacy organizations to serve on the proposed board. To the extent that the intention is to permit these representatives to be appointed from different advocacy organizations, we would suggest modifying the language to read: "Two members representing statewide organizations providing victim advocacy services, appointed by the President of the Senate."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on LD 1633. MCEDV and our member programs are happy to provide any additional information that might be helpful to the Committee as you continue your work on this bill.

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