



April 24, 2023

LD 1633 – “An Act To Establish a Community-based Reentry Program in All DOC Facilities”

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Bruce Noddin, and I am the Executive Director of The Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network or MPRN, a state-wide non-profit focused on providing peer support and coordinated community resources for hundreds of individuals returning to Maine communities from prison, jail, and treatment courts. I was also appointed to the State Workforce Board by Governor Mills and the Maine Recovery Council by Senator Jackson, in 2022.

I am writing in support of LD 1633 – “An Act to Establish a Community-based Reentry Program in All DOC Facilities”.

Since June of 2017, the Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network (MPRN) has assembled a vast statewide network of community organizations & individuals offering a diverse range of support and resources for folks who are transitioning from prison to their communities. Thanks to a partnership with the Maine Department of Corrections the MPRN team has been meeting with incarcerated individuals many months prior to the individual’s date of release from prison. These meetings are a chance for our well trained and supervised Community Reintegration Specialists, who share the lived experience of incarceration, to provide peer support and connection to a network of literally thousands of inter-connected individuals and organizations providing all the requisite resources needed to achieve successful reintegration. The best part is that these peer and community relationships continue after the individual is released from prison.

The core of MPRN’s community-based approach is the community. The community has the responsibility of supporting individuals who are releasing from prison. Why? Because it is in the community’s best interest to do so. Engaged, connected, and supported returning citizens are far less likely to re-offend, making our communities and neighborhoods safer. These same citizens are now part of the workforce and are contributing to their local and state economy through the purchase of goods and services, and in turn paying sales, property and income taxes. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, families are more likely to be reunited and more children have parents who are actively engaged in their lives.

Within this community-based approach, peer support is the glue that holds the entire release plan together. Even the best release plans can fall apart without the scaffolding provided by a peer support person with lived experience of incarceration, recovery from substance use disorder, and recovery from incarceration. All it takes is a difficult conversation with a loved one, co-worker, supervisor, friend, or service provider to overwhelm a recently released person. The Peer Recovery Support or Community Reintegration Specialist is there to help process the emotions of these difficult life situations and relate to these inevitable challenges of reentry, because they’ve been there.

The rippling impact of one, well supported, returning citizen can change whole communities. In our work with MPRN we’ve witnessed firsthand, the change one person can make as a dedicated employee, family member, and contributing member of society. We’ve seen the positive ripple effect this has on others who are in the criminal justice system and on those whose behaviors may lead to criminal involvement.

The goal of a well-designed, community-based reentry program is to shift much of the burden of reentry from the DOC back to the community. In this person-centered model, well-coordinated and targeted

resources are important, but it's the human connection to peers and relationship building that ultimately determine an individual's likelihood of not returning to the system and realizing their full potential.

Through community and peer relationships, LD 1633 restores the hope of families, individuals, and communities. Hope that we can accomplish great things. Hope that we can give back to our communities. Hope that we can be reunited with our loved ones. Hope that we can break the cycle of incarceration and be of assistance to our fellow community members.

I hope the committee will consider recommending that LD 1633 ought to pass.

Thank you!

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