

Maine Youth Justice

Date:

Senator Pinny H. Beebe-Center, Chair
Representative Suzanne Salisbury, Chair
Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
State House , Room 436
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: L.D. 1779, An Act to Develop a continuum of care for youth involved in the justice system and to develop alternatives for juveniles incarcerated in Long Creek Youth Development Center.

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Momo and I am a youth steering committee with Maine Youth Justice. I reside in Lewiston, Maine.

We need your guys' help to close down Long Creek. I think we need more programs rather than having young people going to a place where there's guards telling the youths what to do and telling them what to wear and when to shower. I can tell you what I went through when I was incarcerated when I was 16 years old. When I first experienced it I had a hard time and stress even though I was there for a month it felt like I was in there for years or forever. The struggle was real.

I'm hoping that we can use this bill and the community to open up programs for these young people that are going through mental health rather than putting them in a place where the youths are not learning anything and are being treated wrong. The guards are controlling your life like they own you. It's so bad to be in there. Maine needs to invest in resources that will rehabilitate and support young people.

LD 1779 will create a reinvestment group that will be able to reinvest the millions that we spend on youth incarceration and set up a process for needs assessments. For these reasons, I request this Committee vote to pass on LD 1779.

Thank you for your time,

Momo Duale