

## MAINE YOUTH JUSTICE

Date: April 28 2023

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 Adan Abdi And I am a Community Organizer with Maine Youth justice. I currently live in Lewiston Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of LD 1779

I was 16 when I first encountered Long Creek Youth Development Center. My first thought was it's unfair because I always thought you had to explain your side of situations but when it came to me as a person of youth I had no voice. When I went inside I saw people that looked like me but I didn't see people I could trust. I saw people who had no choice but to deal with me and when they were tired of dealing with me they would either isolate me or remind me of what I was and why I was there. I know long creek does not work for youth because it didn't work for me, a child who had made mistakes and was trying to find themselves in a community that was new to me. I saw the ways guards would participate in starting arguments in between youth that would turn into fist fights that would result in them being charged or them messing up a lengthy good behavior , I saw how they treated those that went to the guards for help and how they supported outcasting them. Yeah I believe the youth went there to be

developed but what for? The community or another sentence at long creek. We must create alternatives like credible messengers who are community based that can be hands-on involved in these youth lives. We need Mental health evaluations consistently in youth cases . We need community based walk-in centers all over the state so that youth can openly say they need help in ways that they aren't judged or lost within the cracks of the system. We as a people need to stop making it okay to lock children up in cages. We must reintegrate these youth back into the community where it all started and we must hold the community accountable for their youth and really ask ourselves why these youth have made the decisions they have made. Long creek was built in the year of 2002 and since then youth have continuously gone in and out of the facility and youth crimes are continuously happening and no one has asked why or even looked closely and asked what is going on? Does the Long Creek Youth development center really even work?

In summary, LD 1779 would benefit the community and young people in positive and functional ways. For these reasons, I request this Committee to vote ought to pass on LD 1779.

Thank you for your consideration and time,

Adan Abdi