

**Testimony in Support of LD 648
to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

April 23, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.* I am testifying in strong support of LD 648 to expand Maine's SCCP program.

I support this bill because the Maine Department of Corrections has built **strong guardrails around its program**. The Department guardrails are designed to ensure, as much as possible, that there are no surprises and that success is assured, as much as possible. So far, their track record has been outstanding—not only have most succeeded but the failures have had little impact.

The Department policy for SCCP, number 27.2, sets out the ground rules for application and approval, through a rather stringent process by both the staff and the resident. If I may quote from their policy setting the ground rules for consideration of SCCP candidates:¹

5. All decisions relating to whether an eligible resident is recommended for approval or is approved to transfer to SCCP shall have as the primary determining factor the likelihood that the resident will successfully complete the program, considering, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- a. the fulfillment of:
 1. expectations as to conduct;
 2. expectations as to work, education, and rehabilitation programs assigned in the resident's individualized case plan;
 3. other rehabilitative efforts, including the resident's demonstration of positive change; and
 4. other accomplishments (e.g., volunteering, mentoring other residents, etc.);
- b. arrangements for suitable housing in the community, taking into consideration the proximity of housing to any victim, including a victim's housing, place of employment, or educational institution being attended, if applicable;
- c. the existence of support systems and resources in the community; and

¹ I should note that this and all other MDOC policies are available online at <https://www.maine.gov/corrections/policies>

* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.

- d. if applicable, participation in community programs during the current time in custody (e.g., furloughs, work release, etc.). (*MDOC policy, 27.2, p 3*)

I want to draw special attention to the fact that the candidate is evaluated not only on their plan, but on their rehabilitative work and participation while in the facility.

I also want to draw special attention to the fact that MDOC staff will have gotten to know the resident fairly well and also observed how they have responded to adversity. This knowledge provides an additional guardrail.

The stringency of this process is illustrated by the proportion of current residents actually on SCCP. A total of 1542 residents were released in 2023-2024. This would seem to be the pool from which SCCP participants were selected yet only 136 were on SCCP at the end of 2024. In other words, less than nine percent (9%) were approved. This is a **very STRINGENT** process.

In short, just because this new policy would make more residents **eligible** for SCCP does not mean that a lot will be approved to actually do it.

But it will be worth it to provide a redemptive path to those who have earned it and the community fortunate enough to welcome them home.

I urge you to unanimously support LD 648.

I will be happy to try to answer any questions.