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Testimony of Rep. Holly T. Sargent introducing
**LD 1979, Resolve, Directing the Department of Corrections to Convene a
Working Group to Examine the Establishment of a Program to Award
Earned Time Credit for Educational Achievement to Persons Who Are
Incarcerated**
Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Division

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Holly Sargent, and I represent House District 147, 2/3 of the town of York. I am pleased to appear before you today to present **LD 1979, Resolve, Directing the Department of Corrections to Convene a Working Group to Examine the Establishment of a Program to Award Earned Time Credit for Educational Achievement to Persons Who Are Incarcerated.**

This Resolve instructs a DOC working group to gather and analyze relevant data from Corrections systems across the country that have implemented programs for earned time off based on educational attainment. There are currently 15 states that have such programs across the country. Others are in process of review. The programs vary widely as to which incarcerated individuals are eligible and what educational degrees and certificates are included for credit. This resolve directs the DOC to assess these programs to determine if any of them, or a similar program we might design ourselves, would be appropriate, safe and constructive for Maine. The Department will bring a report back to this Committee with the possibility that the Committee could advance relevant legislation.

A key component of the "Maine Model" of corrections is the extensive educational and vocational programming across our facilities. Courses including: GED, HiSET/HSE, Associates, Baccalaureate, Masters and Doctoral Degrees are offered. MDOC also offers many vocational training opportunities including:

- Agriculture/Master Gardiner
- Building Trades
- Business Basics/Financing
- Computer Coding Program

District 147: Part of York

- Computer Literacy & Computer Technology
- Culinary Arts and ServSafe
- NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) Certification
- Small Engine Repair
- Welding

This emphasis on education and training has been a successful strategy and is widely lauded. This is because recidivism numbers for those residents who complete certificate and /or degree programs are among the lowest in the country.

This initiative will explore whether linking earned time-off with the completion of these successful programs could encourage more residents to take part, acquire new skills and enter the workforce with increased chances for success. It will also look at cost savings from shorter sentences and lower recidivism.

I worked with leaders of the DOC to introduce this resolve as an incremental step forward. It does not require that Maine adopt any program after options are reviewed. It also in no way binds this committee to take legislative action. It only requires that we take an honest look at what is happening across the country.

I believe that this can be done within existing resources.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.