



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan presenting

**LD 1923, An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and
Build a Community System of Support**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which is part of Portland. I am pleased to present **LD 1923, An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and Build a Community System of Support**.

First, I should mention that after several meetings and conversations with staff from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Human Services, I am offering an amendment to the bill. An outline of the amendment was sent to the committee's interested parties list on Friday, and I am also attaching it to my testimony for your reference.

The amendment essentially turns the bill into a planning process that would examine the current utilization and programming at the Center, as well as what the future for the Center might be in five years.

Consequently, the amendment eliminates Section 1, which authorizes funding for capital changes. The amendment maintains Section 2 for the time being. The Committee may choose to adjust this section, given the information needs of the Committee.

The amendment rewrites Section 3 to state the purpose of the working group and the timeline for reporting back to the Legislature.

The amendment eliminates Section 4 while rewriting Section 5 to outline how the working group will be established and the scope of its work. The intent is for the working group to assess the treatment and services provided at the Center while examining the adequacy of diversion and community-based options.

This legislation is timely and important for several reasons.

When Long Creek was built over two decades ago, the bed capacity was for 163 youth. And, in fact, a similar facility was built at Mountain View Center, which was later closed and repurposed for another use. Currently, there are fewer than 50 youth at Long Creek, leaving a significant amount of space that is underutilized. At the same time, the number of youth being detained at Long Creek has risen noticeably since COVID-19, when fewer than 30 youth were detained.

I believe that Maine will need a secure facility for juvenile offenders for the foreseeable future. However, we now see from past experience that the need for that facility has significantly changed. We should now take the opportunity to “right size” Long Creek or a similar facility while continuing to invest in diversion and community services initiatives.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

LD 1923, An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and Build a Community System of Support

Sponsor's Amendment presented by Rep. Michael Brennan

Section 1: Eliminate.

Section 2: Keep as is.

Section 3: Replace with the following:

By February 1, 2027, the Department of Corrections (DOC) will submit a plan to the 133rd Legislature that examines the current physical plant use and programming at the Long Creek Youth Development Center. The plan will also recommend proposals for utilization of the physical plant as well as strategies for maximizing treatment and rehabilitation programs over the next five years.

Section 4: Eliminate.

Section 5: Replace with the following:

Sec. 5. Long Creek Youth Development Center working group. A working group is established to develop a plan that examines the current use of Long Creek and the potential for repurposing of land and facilities at the Center over the next five years. The Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services shall convene a stakeholder working group, referred to in this section as "the working group," to study options and best practices for the land and facilities at the center and to simultaneously study the possibility of reinvesting corrections funds currently designated for youth incarceration into a continuum of community-based services.

The members of the working group will be jointly appointed by the Commissioner of Corrections and the Commissioner of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. The working group shall:

A. Study repurposing efforts pursued by other states and municipalities to determine the best practices and consider what might be appropriate in Maine;

B. Examine the current status of land and facilities at the center to determine opportunities for repurposing the land and facilities, including renovating existing buildings or constructing additional facilities;

C. Consider alternate uses for land and facilities at the center, including but not limited to a crisis receiving center, assessment of youth in crisis, a youth emergency shelter, youth transitional housing, and a community resource center;

D. Examine the current use of the center's budget and staffing and explore opportunities for alternative uses of financial and human resources for services, including but not limited to housing, behavioral health, education, substance use disorder prevention and treatment, wraparound case management, and diversion;

E. Explore existing community-based services provided to youth and work with community-based organizations to determine potential programming that could take place on the center's campus;

F. Examine and recommend best practices for maintaining and operating a secure and safe facility for juvenile offenders.