

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Dunkins Pierre. I live in Lewiston with my wife and our two sons, and I'm here today to speak in support of LD 1911 and the principle behind it.

We live in a time when people are often permanently defined by the worst decisions they made early in life. But the reality is that most of us are not the same people at 40 that we were at 14, 20, or even 25. Growth happens. Maturity happens. Change happens.

My own involvement with the justice system began when I was very young. Like many people, I made impulsive decisions and poor choices before I had the judgment or stability I have today. Over time, I took responsibility for my actions, I grew up, and I chose a different path.

Today, I'm a husband and a father. My wife and I serve as youth and young-adult pastors at our church, and for the past several years I've worked with organizations across Lewiston and throughout Maine supporting young people. I often tell them that their past does not have to define their future—but I also know how hard it is to believe that when old records continue to close doors long after someone has changed.

Even after people have paid their debt, a criminal record can still affect employment, housing, education, and full participation in community life. That ongoing punishment doesn't always make our communities safer, but it does make it harder for people who are doing the right things to keep moving forward.

I want to be clear: accountability matters. Public safety matters. And where lines are drawn is a serious responsibility that belongs to this Legislature. My reason for being here today is not to speak to specific eligibility, but to speak to a larger truth—that people are capable of real, lasting change, and our laws should recognize that reality.

LD 1911 represents a thoughtful step toward balancing accountability with opportunity. By allowing for relief after long periods of lawful behavior, it reinforces the idea that rehabilitation is possible and worth acknowledging.

Thank you for your time and for the work you do on behalf of Maine people.