

LD1941 Testimony in favor of Parole

My Name is Darlene George. I am writing today because the parole system has shaped my life in ways that statistics and policy language can't capture.

I am currently incarcerated in Maine. I am also a college graduate, a programs coordinator, and someone who works daily to support healing, education, and growth among our incarcerated women. Yet, despite the work I have done and will continue to do, I live with the reality that change alone does not guarantee a meaningful opportunity for release.

During my incarceration, I have witnessed two older women leave this earth while still in custody. Their deaths left a gaping hole in my heart. These were women who carried wisdom, regret, love, and hope. Yet, they never had the chance to be seen again as who they have become. I often ask myself "what if that were me?" What if my growth, my accountability, and my humanity are never given the chance to matter?

Without parole, time becomes something we serve until it runs out; sometimes until life itself runs out. Families lose mothers and grandmothers. What has been lost cannot be restored, but what is still at stake is whether our justice system allows room for redemption before its too late.

I am reminded that the 13th amendment was meant to end systems that reduce human beings to something less than fully human. Yet, when people are denied any meaningful opportunity for review, no matter how much they grow, age, or change, it can feel as though we are serving time without recognition of our humanity. Parole does not erase accountability, it affirms that people are more than the worst thing they have ever done.

Please support LD 1941 to help ensure that people who have demonstrated growth are given a meaningful opportunity for parole review. Thank you, Darlene George