

To: The Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Deane Rykerson

Date: 8 January 2026

RE: Support for LD 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

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Good Morning Chair Carney, Chair Kuhn and honorable members of The Committee on Judiciary. My name is Deane Rykerson, of Kittery and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1941, "An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole."

One outstanding quality of humanity is our ability to change. If we expect a person will remain the same, there is a good chance our expectations will be met. If we aim for hope in life, a positive outcome is much more likely.

Why do we keep wrongdoers in a training ground for criminal activity? Why do we segregate them from the society that we hope they can return to? Our system of justice emphasizing punishment instead of rehabilitation is outdated.

I understand that victims also have rights to rectify the wrongs that they have experienced and there are so many wrongs in society that need to be settled. But there is an emerging system of reconciliation that has been tried worldwide and is successful. I met a man in Nicaragua whose wife had been tortured and killed in front of his eyes by a former military dictatorship. Through reconciliation, he was able to understand and move on with his life without anger consuming his being.

I am sure you will be shown that this bill makes sense for our budgets and communities, but I have seen so many bills that make sense fail to pass the Maine Legislature. But I will ask every committee member to think: have you ever made a mistake? And what is the best way to learn from your mistakes?

I urge this committee to follow the recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole and vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1941. Let's join the many other states that recognize that people can change, and that our communities are safer when we support that change.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of Maine. I am happy to answer any questions.