



# Restorative Justice Project Maine

January 8, 2026

Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

My name is Norman Hightower. I am a Restorative Services Support Specialist with Restorative Justice Project Maine and recently reentered individual, who has extensive experience with Maine's prison system. I am writing this testimony in support of LD 1941 (An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole) on behalf of myself & RJP Maine.

We firmly believe that if parole were reestablished in Maine's prison system it would greatly benefit the people of Maine. Statistics show that people who are granted parole are 36% less likely to return to prison than those who are "straight released." Maine has one of the highest incarceration rates of any democracy in the world. Lowering that rate would certainly save Maine taxpayers money, as it is 9 times more expensive to incarcerate an individual than it is to supervise them on parole. Experts estimate a \$14.7 million dollar boost to Maine's economy for every 100 prisoners granted parole.

In addition to fiscal advantages, parole can help to provide a rehabilitative transition back into public life. Since Maine abolished discretionary parole in 1976, more Maine prisoners are serving their entire sentences in a cell rather than being afforded opportunities to rehabilitate & transition home to complete their sentences while working & caring for their families. This prevents them from restoring relationships within their families and communities. Those relationships are crucial to helping people like me reduce my chances of recidivism. I personally have found myself in the situation where I was "straight released" from a cell in a secure facility after a long period of incarceration & found it extremely difficult to readjust to societal norms. If I were afforded parole, that adjustment might have been much easier & I may not have wound up reoffending & back in prison time & time again. Reinstating parole could mean that fewer people are damaged by the effects of long term incarceration.

As an individual, I feel that if parole were an option when I was serving my time, I'd have had much more of an incentive to be on my best behavior. I would've tried to take every class or program I could have to get home to my family sooner. It would have given me an incentive to make significant changes in my life. Those changes would have made a difference in my life, the lives of my family members, and the lives of those in my community. Not to mention that, because parole would be merit based, it would provide a safer, more stable environment for corrections officers & inmates inside the prison itself as well.

I greatly appreciate the fact that we, as a state, are concerned with finding ways to help Maine's incarcerated individuals transition back to the community. I urge you to support LD 1941, for the benefit it will have on all Maine communities & residents. Thank you for your careful consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Norman Hightower

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