

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony regarding the profound impact that Maine's lack of a parole system has on the families of incarcerated individuals.

I am here in support of LD 1941.

Maine remains one of the few states in the nation without a parole system. While this policy was initially intended to promote consistency and accountability in sentencing, its long-term consequences have extended far beyond the incarcerated population itself. The absence of parole affects families, children, and communities across the state who continue to bear the emotional, financial, and social costs of indefinite incarceration.

Families play a critical role in rehabilitation and successful reentry. When there is no possibility of parole, it diminishes hope not only for incarcerated individuals but also for their loved ones. Families witness their relatives work diligently to change, complete programs, and demonstrate growth. Yet, the system provides no pathway for that progress to be acknowledged. This lack of incentive undermines rehabilitation and weakens the family bonds that are proven to reduce recidivism.

The emotional toll on families is significant. Without any opportunity for release review, families live with a sense of permanent separation and uncertainty about the future. The financial burden also cannot be ignored. Covering travel expenses, phone calls, and commissary costs for years or decades with no clear endpoint. These ongoing hardships disproportionately affect women, children, and lower-income households, compounding cycles of poverty and instability. People with an immediate family member in prison are spending an average of nearly \$4,200 annually to stay in touch with and support each of their loved ones behind bars.¹

My husband is currently incarcerated at MSP, and the impact that this has on myself and my family is significant. I travel an hour and a half every weekend to see him and spend hundreds of dollars to be able to talk to him throughout the weeks. We have no hope for him to come home any time soon. We have a family to raise and children to watch grow into the amazing humans that we intend them to be. But without him here, I'm the one facing the challenges of supporting my family.

Reinstating parole in Maine would not mean automatic release. It would mean the restoration of hope, fairness, and accountability. A parole system provides a structured, evidence-based process for evaluating rehabilitation and readiness for reintegration. It ensures that those who have demonstrated true reform are given an opportunity to contribute positively to society, while maintaining public safety through oversight and review.

In closing, the absence of parole in Maine does not serve justice; it extends punishment beyond prison walls and into the homes and hearts of families. Restoring parole would strengthen families, promote rehabilitation, and align Maine with a more humane and effective model of corrections policy.

Please give your unanimous support on LD 1941. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Rachael Coleman

Gray, ME

1. <https://www.wecantaffordit.us/pdf/We%20Can't%20Afford%20It%20Report%20-%20FD.us.pdf>