

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Pedro E. Santiago. I'm a resident of Knox County. I am writing in support of **LD 1941 An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole**. Most Maine citizens are not aware that while they're hard earned tax dollars support public safety initiatives, including corrections, probation, and parole services, Maine does not currently provide a parole option for its own citizens. Instead, parole is available only for individuals who committed their crime in another state. This creates both a gap in fairness and a missed opportunity for our communities since there is currently no parole for those sentenced under our laws after May 1, 1976. This means many Mainers who have served long sentences, cannot benefit from parole, even when they have transformed their lives.

I'm living testimony that a person who has been incarcerated for 25 years or more is not the same uneducated person as when they committed a youthful or isolated mistake. During my incarceration in Maine, I have had access to education (from adult, basic education through associate, bachelors, or even masters degree courses), vocational training (in trades such as building, welding, coding, etc.), behavioral and rehabilitation programming. These programs help people grow, heal, and rebuild.

In addition, proposals under consideration in Maine include making those with 25-year or longer sentences, eligible for parole after serving 20 years, or making those with short sentences eligible after they have served, at least half of their sentence. Existing criteria for the Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP) require good behavior, participation in programming, and assessment of risk and need. These criteria will also apply for any reentry program.

Successful reentry is not only about individual rehabilitation; it is also about strengthening public safety, reducing recidivism, and promoting healthier communities. Evidence shows that structured support, incentives for good behavior, and meaningful second chances can reduce the likelihood of reoffending and increase the chances of successful reintegration. Maine deserves a system that reflects these values and offers all its citizens a real path forward.

Passing LD 1941 would recognize that people can change, and many do change, given the opportunity. It would allow those who have invested time in education, work, counseling, pro social relationships, and who have demonstrated responsible behavior, to have hope. It is not about discounting the harm, or forgetting the past it is about fairness, safety, and public policy that strengthens communities.

By supporting and passing LD 1941, you will be affirming that Maine believes in accountability paired with opportunity. This legislation can help individuals rebuild their lives, reunite with their families, contribute to the workforce, and ultimately strengthen the fabric of our state.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important step toward a safer, more just, and more compassionate Maine.

Respectfully submitted,
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