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I am writing to advocate for the closing of Long Creek Youth Development Center, support decriminalization of mental health needs, and to support more developmentally appropriate facilities for Maine's youth who are experiencing difficulties in this state. Incarceration continues to add to the accumulation of trauma that these young people have experienced, and the funds that are allocated for such a center will be much more effective as a provision for mental health services and restorative justice approach to the lagging skills and social and developmental disadvantages of these children. As a teacher in this state who has worked extensively with students from these disadvantaged backgrounds, I deeply believe that criminalization of behaviors they develop as a means to cope with trauma only adds to the accumulation of roadblocks in these children's lives. And that is what these "offenders" really are: Children whose needs have not been met by the larger community. Please consider an alternative to the current, "old school" approach to misbehavior. Providing assistance for children who exhibit severe difficulties through a mental health framework such as a new agency separate from law enforcement/DHS created and sustained by community members with experience in youth development and restorative justice. It is clear that incarceration is completely ineffective and targets the most needy of our kids. Their difficulties are failures of systems in their life and should be treated as an "us" problem, not one to be shuffled away into the dark confines of detention centers. Thank you for considering this