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I'm writing to oppose LD 546. My concern is that the bill as it is currently written will only continue to perpetuate and uphold a system that promotes youth incarceration.

I ask instead that the committee close Long Creek, divest from the Department of Corrections, and invest in the future of our youth by repurposing the Long Creek facility, and reinvesting those public dollars to create a community-based care center that offers job trainings, mental health services, and programs that support young people's growth and development.

All the system does now is make it harder for young people to finish school, get jobs in the future, and build positive relationships that will help them become healthy adults.

The only part of the bill I support is the provision that would repeal a section of the Maine Juvenile Code that allows detention for physical care for youth who have nowhere to go. According to the Center for Children's Law and Policy report, 53% of the youth in detention are there because of this clause.

As we all know prison is no place for anyone, especially young people. It's time for those in power to listen and take leadership from people and youth who have experienced incarceration, and honor the demands of organizations like Maine Youth Justice that are calling on the Maine Legislature to pass legislation that creates a plan for the closure of Long Creek, decriminalizes our youth, ends the school to prison pipeline, and repurposes Long Creek for community, not incarceration.

Thank you.