

To Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

RE: LD 546 - An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force

I oppose this bill, along with Maine Youth Justice, the ACLU of Maine and the Maine Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and urge the immediate closure of Long Creek.

I'm in favor of spending the millions of dollars saved by closing Long Creek on community support, programs and solutions throughout Maine, investing in the community organizations that have the expertise, skills, and relationships to care for young people.

Listen to the communities most impacted by youth incarceration. They would end the criminalization of youth and invest in the care, support, and resources for young people and their families that is led by the community, **not** the Department of Corrections. It is the wrong approach to build residences for youth that would be staffed by correctional workers. Treatment programs, housing, and recovery support services are what's needed. Not incarceration.

Respectfully,

Natasha Mayers

I am an artist who has taught at Long Creek, Kennebec County Jail, and Thomaston prison, seven years at AMHI, and 46 years of art workshops with adults with mental illness in Augusta and Waterville.

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