



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of
**LD 963, An Act To Create Culturally Sensitive Treatment and Recovery Halfway Houses
for Immigrants Transitioning out of the Juvenile Justice System**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Kristen Cloutier and I proudly represent House District 60, part of Lewiston. I am here in support of **LD 963, An Act To Create Culturally Sensitive Treatment and Recovery Halfway Houses for Immigrants Transitioning out of the Juvenile Justice System.**

On February 6, 2019 Governor Mills issued Executive Order 2 to reduce overdose deaths, expand treatment and recovery efforts, and begin a focus on prevention. LD 963 assists in that directive.

Halfway houses provide transitional housing and treatment for individuals who have a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder. Through a structured, peer-oriented program, the staff at these facilities assist clients in maintaining recovery while moving from an intensive rehabilitation setting to increased independence and integration into the community.

These programs work to address the complex needs of clients, utilizing an integrated, individualized, and client-centered approach, led by staff trained in trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, and mental health and substance use treatment. To help individuals stabilize and develop goals that will move them toward the most independent, supportive, permanent living situation possible, staff and clients work together to develop individual care plans.

However, the halfway houses in Maine right now do not currently offer the cultural sensitivity necessary to provide immigrant families with the security they need to trust them as a safe and reliable place for their children to live and receive treatment on their path to recovery.

LD 963 would help to change that by requiring the Department of Corrections to work with members of our local immigrant communities to establish and provide culturally-sensitive halfway house services and substance use disorder treatment, mental health treatment, education, job training and employment, and job opportunity services for immigrant youth transitioning out of the juvenile justice system.

Such a setting would provide the support that these young people so desperately need to make a successful transition back into society and to reach their full potential as active members of our communities.

As a representative of the second largest city in Maine with one of the largest immigrant populations in the State, I wholeheartedly support this legislation and I hope you will too.