

Christine Baglieri  
Lewiston/Auburn Outright

My name is Christine Baglieri, and I live in Leeds. I am the Youth Project's Coordinator for Lewiston/Auburn Outright, which is an organization with over 20 years of experience cultivating safe and affirming environments for LGBTQ+ youth. We do our work by offering a weekly drop-ins, youth programming, public school educational opportunities, and more. We also provide direct support and resources to our youth who are experiencing discrimination, abuse at home, poverty, mental health struggles, homelessness, and other barriers. We work with some of the most at risk youth in the Lewiston/Auburn area. I am speaking on behalf of myself, and I am speaking with a history of 6 years with our organization.

I am here to show my enthusiastic support for LD 1668. I am in support of this act because I know that it will greatly improve the lives of the youth I work with.

On October 29th, 2016, our community of Outright youth and adult allies lost a beloved community member who took his life while incarcerated at Longcreek Detention Center. We have directly and deeply felt the impact of what happens when youth are locked away in cages instead of given the resources they need to survive and thrive. His death was unnecessary, and he should be with us today.

In my role as Youth Projects Coordinator at Lewiston/Auburn Outright, I see the trauma and violence that happens to under-resourced communities. I know what happens when youth are experiencing poverty, abuse, homelessness, untreated mental health struggles, bullying and discrimination. I have countless stories of youth who experience all these barriers and are completely under-resourced, and they are suspended from school, criminalized, institutionalized, and punished in various ways, all because they are experiencing barriers that they have absolutely no control over and no resources to overcome.

I can't tell you the excitement and relief that would come to our communities if we knew that instead of incarcerating our youth, we would reinvest \$18.6 million dollars to lift barriers and bring resources to our communities. More mental health services, group homes, food and rent assistance, youth centers, art and theater programming, restorative justice initiatives, intervention services in the cases of abuse, and much more would keep our kids out of harmful institutions, and in their homes, schools, and communities, healthy and happy.

Our youth do not need punishment, they need love, compassion, and for people to tell them what is true; they matter. This bill would not only keep kids out of jail, it would help all of the youth who would also benefit from an increase in community resources, regardless of whether they would have ended up in Longcreek or not.

23% of youth detained in Long Creek are Black Mainer, and 53% of youth detained are there because there was no community based residential programs for the youth. 75% of youth at Long Creek had previously received mental health outpatient services, and 20-40% of Maine's incarcerated youth population identify as LGBTQ+, despite making up less than 10% of the US youth population generally.

If this isn't obvious discrimination based on a youth's race, class, gender, and ability, I don't know what is. Historically disadvantaged communities are lacking resources in their communities, being criminalized, and locked up. It's clear.

Finally, it takes \$250,000 per year to incarcerate a young person. If you asked one of the youth in our programming what they would do with \$250,000 this year to lift their barriers, they would probably say things like, buy a house, get a car, start therapy, buy food for their family, get a rental to get away from their abuser, pay for college, or give it to their family who is living in poverty. For this reason, I enthusiastically support LD 1668.

Thank you so much