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COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY OF

**RANDALL A. LIBERTY, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

In Opposition to

**LD 1668 Resolve, To Develop a Plan to Close the Long Creek Youth Development Center and Redirect Funding to
Community Integration Services for Adjudicated Youth**

**Before the
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
May 10, 2021**

Senator Deschambault and Representative Warren and other distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I am Randall Liberty, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Corrections providing testimony in opposition to LD 1668.

Staff throughout the Maine Department of Correction's Division of Juvenile Services continue to embody the mission that all justice involved youth shall experience a fair, equitable, and responsive juvenile justice system that provides each with positive outcomes.

In February of this year we made public the Division of Juvenile Services Action Plan detailing the strategies of the department to lessen the reliance on institutional secure confinement for youth in our purview. These strategies include incorporating the recommendations of the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force, incorporating recommendations from members of the public including those with lived experience, and other related stakeholders and advocates. The work done during the last two years with so many has, and continues to focus on ensuring the Division of Juvenile Services expands community based programs and incentives, increases cross system collaborations, and, as a result, reduce the use of institutional secure confinement when less restrictive care can be a safe alternative.

The Department of Corrections recognizes the process we are in now is fluid, and that as we move into more community based programs, more collaborations with other entries, and as we implement the recommendations brought forth by the Center for Children Law and Policy and the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force, we may need to make modifications to our action plan. We are more than willing to modify as we go, but that does not include closure of the Long Creek Youth Development Center.

The actions set forth by the Division of Juvenile Services, in direct collaboration with so many people here today, will help ensure changes made to the juvenile justice system are carefully monitored and measured for outcomes. What we've seen thus far is positive progress, including the significant reduction in the number of girls committed, reduction in overall commitment rates, increased diversion, and two new community placements, with a third expected in June for youth requiring step down services before returning home.

The actions of the Division of Juvenile Services, the focus on monitoring and measuring outcomes will help ensure we don't see unintended consequences. We've been careful with our plan to ensure unintended consequences like juveniles going into the adult system, juveniles being placed out of state, juveniles being returned to homes that are unsafe do no materialize.

The Maine Department of Corrections remains committed to seeing that all justice involved youth shall experience a fair, equitable, and responsive juvenile justice system that provides each with positive outcomes.

I look forward to answering questions during work session about the progress we've seen and our plans.

Sincerely,

Randall A. Liberty
Commissioner
Maine Department of Corrections