

Anne Farrington
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(Anne Farrington, Auburn)

RE: SUPPORT FOR 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

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and other members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety:

What is wrong with us? Why is it taking us so long to close Long Creek? Kids don't belong in prisons; it solves nothing. Children experiencing homelessness, children with mental health issues, children with no grown-ups in their lives to support them when they make mistakes, children in crisis with nowhere to go --- do not belong in jail.

Why is it taking us so long to close an institution that causes harm to youth? What does it say about the State of Maine, that it continues to finance a facility that simply is unable to protect and meet the needs of the kids who are sent there?

What's it going to take to close Long Creek? Not the 2016 suicide by a child in Long Creek. Not the ACLU's 2017 demand for Long Creek's closure, predicated by an alarmingly negative review by the Children's Center for Law and Policy. Not a 2018 report by USM's law school and Muskie School of Public Service. Not repeated investigations and calls for closure by the media, the general public, and the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force.

It's going to take LD 1668, to create the plan to close Long Creek by June 30, 2023; to divert millions of dollars of youth incarceration funds to community-based and other appropriate integration services; to transition kids and Long Creek staff out of the center; and to repurpose Long Creek as a community center with supportive housing.

We're Mainers; we have everything we need to accomplish this for our children and our future. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass. Thanks.