

Matthew Fortin
Lisbon, ME
May 6 2021

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

Representative Warren, Senator Deschambault and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Matthew Fortin. I'm here to testify in support of LD 1668 and closing Long Creek.

At the age of 11, I was first taken to Long Creek Youth Development Center and for a young kid this was traumatic. To be locked up in a juvenile jail was something I never thought would happen. From there I was labeled as a bad kid and it was not about my mental health anymore. I was in and out of Long Creek at 14 and committed when I was 16 years old.

From that time, some horrible and unthinkable things happen not just to me but to others around me. This is just a small list. After five months in detention in the maple unit, I was molested by a male resident in a pod bathroom. One year after becoming committed in pine unit I was raped by a male resident. One year after being committed I saw a 12 year old get his teeth kicked in by a correctional officer. I heard about the death of Maise by suicide. I heard a female resident got assaulted by a CO.

I could on and on about all of the horrible and unthinkable things but that would take all day. Long Creek has a negative impact on the mental and physical health of the youth it houses.

I do not just speak for myself when I say Long Creek needs to go. We can better use the funds to treat mental health problems and battle poverty. Most of the youth have mental illness and are not properly cared for.

We have a chance to do the right thing to close Long Creek and stop this chain of hurt and neglect being forced upon youth. I say and others agree that the funding we use to lock the mental ill and homeless youth is better spent on mental health treatment, building homes, and feeding the hungry.

Closing Long Creek is the start to a brighter future of our youth.

Matthew Fortin is an 18 year old from Lisbon, ME and is artist with Maine Inside Out and organizer with Maine Youth Justice. He is passionate about supporting young people, being outdoors, and writing poetry. Matthew is currently incarcerated inside Androscoggin County Jail. This testimony was written by Matthew inside ACJ and submitted by members of Maine Youth Justice. Matthew is available for questions regarding this testimony.