

Joseph Jackson
Lisbon Falls

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC)

To: Committee Members for Criminal Justice 05/10/2021
Fm: Joseph Jackson: MPAC Executive Director
Re: letter in support LD 1668

Honorable Members of Criminal Justice

My name is Joseph Jackson, and I'm the Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC), MPAC is a statewide group formed in 2007. I am also a member of the Juvenile Justice task force. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1668, RE: Closure of Long Creek Youth Development Center, and believe this bill is line with findings of the task force to close longcreek and reinvest the money into community services and programming for youth.

Recently I attended a court hearing for a man seeking to have his sentence for probation violation reviewed. The man (who suffers from substance use disorder) had been given a full revocation of his sentence due to substance use related issues.

When he shared his story with the court, he spoke of being sent to foster care at age 11. He shared that he had been emancipated as an adult at 14. He then outlined that he had been in and out of Long Creek from 14 till adulthood. Within a year of his release, he had received 20 years within the Maine Department of Corrections.

That man's testimony was particularly moving for me. Not only because he was a black man in an all-white proceeding, but because he was taking accountability and apologizing to every person he had harmed. I couldn't help but think of the harm that has been caused to him through his contact with Maine's Juvenile Justice System.

How many young people are we willing to throw away? How many young people with similar backgrounds are we consigning to the same fate as this man? How many more are we intending to fail before we fix this broken system.

It's time to support young people in Maine. It's time to close Longcreek and use the money for that facility to support youth and give them the resources they need to heal and thrive in our communities.

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