

May 6, 2021

To: The Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary**Re: Testifying Neither For Nor Against 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**

Dear Chairpersons Representative Warren and Senator Deschambault, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Erica King, and I am a Senior Justice Policy Associate at the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. A principal focus of my work and research for the last 17 years has been on juvenile and criminal justice issues in Maine and nationally. I am here to provide background to the Committee to aid your consideration of this important resolve. My focus today is on the improved outcomes associated with community based justice reinvestment, as well as the risks of secure confinement to the social and economic well-being of youth and communities.

National research, local data, and a growing number of correctional leaders across the country¹ are overwhelmingly aligned in finding that for young people, the use of secure confinement is likely to increase the likelihood of adult incarceration², increase costs to taxpayers, and lead to a lifetime of negative outcomes for our young people³. The most recent Maine recidivism study⁴ notes that youth on average spent 13.6 months at Long Creek, before being released to the community and approximately 42% returned to Long Creek or the adult criminal justice system within 2 years of release⁵. Additionally, a recent study on youth incarceration, health, and length of stay⁶ found the effects of incarceration during adolescence or young adulthood are associated with:

- Damaged social networks
- Decreased educational opportunities
- Severe functional limitations
- Negative health and mental health outcomes

¹ <https://yclj.org/joint-statement>

² Aizer, A & Doyle, J. (2013). Juvenile Incarceration, Human Capital and Future Crime: Evidence from Randomly-Assigned Judges. NBER Working Paper No. 19102: https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w19102/w19102.pdf

³ http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/Sticker_Shock_2020.pdf

⁴ Dumont, R. & King, E. (2017). Youth recidivism: Diversion to discharge in Maine's juvenile justice system: <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justice>

⁵ Of these, only 17% were returned for new criminal conduct, 15% were returned for "technical violations," meaning either they violated a condition, like not attending school regularly OR because there is no one willing and able to supervise or for their own protection as a child welfare measure when these young people have no home to go to or adults to care for and support them or treatment is unavailable.

⁶ Gonzalez, Youth Incarceration, Health, and Length of Stay, 45 Fordham Urb. I.J.; 45 (2017). Available at: <https://ir.lownet.fordham.edu/uij/vol45/iss1/2>

- Increased risk of incarceration as adults.

These costs are even greater for poor and/or Black, Indigenous and youth of color. In comparison, offering community-based services to young people as an alternative to secure confinement has been shown to cost less,⁷ be more effective at reducing recidivism,⁸ and achieve positive youth outcomes.⁹

In 2020, the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force concluded its work, once again pointing to the urgent need for investment and reinvestment in a continuum of community-based services. These recommendations were informed by members representing multiple agencies, legislators, members of the Judiciary, practitioners and individuals from impacted communities.

LD 1668 seeks to develop a plan for accomplishing the shared goals across systems and communities for justice reinvestment, which have yet to be realized. LD 1668 could have positive impact on the future of scaling resources in the right places to improve economic and social outcomes for Maine's young people, families, and communities.

Sincerely,



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⁷ Justice Policy Institute. (2020). Sticker Shock: The cost of youth incarceration. Retrieved from <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/12928>

⁸ Bonnie, R., Johnson, R., Chemers, B., and Schuck, J. (2013). Reforming juvenile justice: A developmental approach. National Research Council. Retrieved from <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/14685/reforming-juvenile-justice-a-developmental-approach>

⁹ McCarthy, P., Schiraldi, V., and Shark, M. (2016). The future of youth justice: A community-based alternative to the youth prison model. *New Thinking in Community Corrections*, No. 2. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250142.pdf>