

JadeRose SanGiovanni
Maine Youth Justice, South Portland Resident

My name is JadeRose SanGiovanni and I am a 17-year-old youth organizer with Maine Youth Justice, as well as the youth representative on the South Portland Human Rights Commission, and am a South Portland resident and a high school student. I have lived in South Portland my whole life and strongly believe that the Long Creek Youth Development Center must be shut down, and the \$18.6 million that is spent incarcerating youth be reinvested back into communities that need it most. I'm writing to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1668 and support the closure of Long Creek Youth Development Center.

As I have gotten older I have watched many classmates and friends go inside Long Creek and come out completely different people; and after working with Maine Youth Justice for about a year and a half, I have met so many young adults who were formerly incarcerated at Long Creek. I have heard countless awful stories of what it was like for them inside. Youth prisons are traumatizing children and ostracizing them from their communities. I have a friend that has gone into Long Creek twice now since meeting them in middle school, and I have watched them get more involved in dangerous activities after coming out. Unfortunately this has caused us to drift apart. It is heartbreaking to see so many kids give up on their hopes and dreams and the light in their eyes diminish after being locked up. These youth who are finding themselves at Long Creek just need support and care but are kept in a cell stripped away from their communities and are missing out on such a crucial time in their lives. How can we expect these young people to take care of themselves after being incarcerated when they are given none of the tools necessary to do so?

Youth in Maine need better access to housing, healthcare, mental health services, education, and other basic necessities. It is extremely clear that youth incarceration is doing nothing to actually support youth and if anything it is worsening their chances of successful future.

Shutting down Long Creek and using the \$18.6 million to reinvest into the things youth and their communities need will drastically help at preventing youth from doing the things that are getting them locked up.