

I am writing in support of LD 1668. The adult model for incarceration largely fails in terms of recidivism, rehabilitation, and respect. However, when this model is applied to juvenile offenders the results of this type of incarceration is abysmal. Youth are not adults who are just younger. They often have a very different point of view and simply have not had enough time to make use of their experience in trying to navigate the complexities of adulthood. It is easier for them to make mistakes due to their lack of fully comprehending the ramifications of their actions. This is not to say that they are not responsible, but only that we need to develop and utilize a system that takes their limited capabilities into account. Even more importantly, it is clear that many youth offenders have well-documented mental illness. Access to mental health experts and treatment at Long Creek is wholly inadequate for treating these conditions. There are other models which show that a community-based system that focusses on education, therapy, and fostering community is much more productive and effective at reducing future criminal actions. LD 1668 is a well thought out plan that occurs over a reasonable period of time and utilizes knowledgeable stakeholders to develop a plan that would keep the public safe while helping these young people reach the goal of becoming productive adult citizens. This is the perfect opportunity to reimagine incarceration and begin moving toward a more just and productive way of addressing juvenile crime. I encourage you to support this bill and put Maine in a leadership position with regard to treating juvenile offenders with respect.