

Katie Whitehead
Lewiston maine

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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 Katie Whitehead. I am the mother of three kids, friend and sister of those incarcerated, and a lead organizer with Maine Youth Justice.

I'm here to testify in support of LD 1668 and closing Long Creek. My brother has been in and out of jail since he was 12 due to his substance use disorder. I've watched how incarceration has impacted him mentally and emotionally. There was a time I saw my brother and I didn't even recognize him. He told me when he was detoxing, guards made fun of him and made him feel like trash. I would never wish that on anybody. I've seen how incarceration has impacted friends and family members. I have a friend in jail who is mentally going through a lot and there is not much I can do to support. However, if we close Long Creek and stop investing in prisons, we can support youth as a community before people get locked up.

I'm here to call for the closure of Long Creek as a mother of young children and with siblings in schools. I don't want to worry about my children or siblings. I believe that if we close Long Creek we can turn the property into something more useful. I want to close Long Creek because emotionally it is abusive. I feel that it is an abuse of power. It is not helping the ones we need. If we were to close Long Creek, we could have housing for homelessness. This bill will turn the building into a community center where youth can access mental health resources. We can make it into a recreational space for young people.

I'm a part of Maine Youth Justice, a youth-led campaign to close Long Creek because young people deserve so much better than the threat of incarceration.