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Testimony of Assistant House Majority Leader Rachel Talbot Ross presenting

LD 1593, An Act To Provide Pathways to Rehabilitation, Reentry and Reintegration

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent House District 40 in Portland and serve as assistant House majority leader. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 1593, An Act To Provide Pathways to Rehabilitation, Reentry and Reintegration**.

The Supervised Community Confinement Program, or SCCP, is incredibly important to reentry and the transition of residents from correctional institutions back into their communities. Slowly readapting to life beyond the walls of imprisonment is a much-needed step toward success and non-recidivism.

SCCP is a system of accountability and supervision that allows individuals to use the skills they learned through complete programs while incarcerated to phase back into society through a system that gradually gives more freedom and autonomy. This is opposed to complete freedom upon release, which can be very overwhelming after residing within an institution for long periods.

SCCP requires work, education and/or treatment to be maintained in order to continue. This is perhaps the most compelling reason to extend the eligibility period and ensure that more incarcerated people are transitioned to SCCP: None of these activities are mandatory while incarcerated, and all of them are the top factors in lowering recidivism. SCCP promotes rehabilitation and success because it creates accountability on both ends: for offenders to maintain work, education and treatment, and for the Department of Corrections to make those opportunities available beyond the walls and fences of confinement.

As members of this committee know well, lowering rates of recidivism means safer communities. Ultimately, it also saves taxpayer dollars.

Extending the eligibility window for SCCP offers a more meaningful transition into communities. The current process is too short to really phase offenders back into society. Reintegrating over a longer period and learning to cope with freedom slowly is much more effective than being thrown from isolation into freedom and having little to no help with the process.

Returning members of this committee will recall working on SCCP during the 129th Legislature. We were able to reach an agreement and advance a bill through most of the legislative process, all while earning strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. However, like so much of our work, that bill did not ultimately become law due to our early adjournment in 2020.

LD 1593 resurrects that work and builds upon it. We have had many conversations with residents as well as with the Department of Corrections leading up to today. I want to thank both the Department and the residents for their extraordinary efforts to collaborate and find consensus. It has been humbling and inspiring to work alongside them in this process.

This group is working on finalizing a draft amendment for your consideration, and we are confident we will have final language for your review in advance of the work session. The amendment addresses several components around which we are still working to reach consensus, but we are very close and agree that we want to make progress this session.

Like the iteration of this bill from the 129th, the amendment will extend the period of time in which a resident of a correctional facility is eligible for SCCP to up to 30 months from the end of their sentence or, in the case of a split sentence, the unsuspended portion. New components of this bill clarify eligibility and the determination/application process while allowing sufficient latitude for the department to determine the administrative details. We are also seeking to add a data tracking component.

We are already planning to meet on Monday to finalize the details of the amendment and will provide that to the committee as soon as possible. I look forward to continuing our work together so that we can deliver the best policy proposal to you by next Friday's work session. In the meantime, others involved in the process are here to speak today, and residents who could not attend have submitted written remarks.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to take questions.



Maine Department of Corrections April 2021 Data Reporting

Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP) Cases by Month

The purpose of the Supervised Community Confinement Program is to provide a means of successful reentry of facility residents into the community. Residents transferred to supervised community confinement are still considered facility residents while in the program. The place of confinement is in the community, rather than in a correctional facility. Participation in this program is a privilege that may be afforded to residents who meet the established criteria.

The charts below show the placements, completions, and violations of SCCP, as well as the census at the end of each month.

Males	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21
End of Previous Month Census	43	40	38	37	32	36	31	24	21	16	16	10	12
SCCP Placements	13	10	7	8	10	5	3	3	0	4	2	3	2
SCCP Completions	15	12	7	12	4	10	10	6	5	3	8	1	5
Violations (return to custody)	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
End of Month SCCP Census	40	38	37	32	36	31	24	21	16	16	10	12	8

Females	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21
End of Previous Month Census	20	29	30	25	18	18	15	16	17	20	21	19	21
SCCP Placements	18	4	3	1	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	5	3
SCCP Completions	6	3	6	7	5	7	3	3	1	1	3	3	4
Violations (return to custody)	3	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
End of Month SCCP Census	29	30	25	18	18	15	16	17	20	21	19	21	19

2021 Totals	Males	Female
Placements	11	13
Completions	17	11
Violations	2	3