



The Neighborhood

United Church of Christ

February 9, 2022

To: The Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am writing in favor of LD 696 An Act to Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine.

I am an ordained pastor and a registered nurse. As a pastor I believe that we are all created in the image of God. For me that means that each of us, no matter who we are, deserve dignity. Solitary confinement which LD 696 defines as more than 20 hours alone in cell, is inhumane. As a pastor I cannot be silent about issues that diminish a person's humanity.

We know that solitary confinement causes harm. Specifically, it is known to cause a deterioration of mental health. As a nurse I cannot stand by and accept a standard of care within the Maine Department of Corrections that causes harm to people. This is not okay and we can do better.

I support LD 696, a bill which if passed, provides good alternatives to solitary confinement. It doesn't just band solitary confinement, but it gives us a path forward on how to do things better. It gives us a path forward to create a system that includes dignity and does not do additional harm.

We know that the majority of people who are incarcerated will return home. They will be our neighbors. I want my neighbor, who was incarcerated, to return home with more tools in their toolbox on how to be successful at living in community. Solitary confinement does not give people more tools, it tears people down, and it destroys. But LD 696 gives people the tools they need. So that when they come home, as our neighbors they have what that they need to be successful in community.

I support LD 696 because it provides a standard of care that protects people from the inhumanity and harm caused by solitary confinement. It is important for the State of Maine to have such a standard because ultimately, we are protecting ourselves and the people we love.

I believe that it is human nature to think that none of us and nobody we love will ever be incarcerated. But life can change in a blink of an eye and there but by the grace of God go I.

We never know when it will be somebody we love, a child or a spouse who is suffering with mental illness, that may someday for just a moment be out of control and who may end up making a series of bad decisions that end in incarceration.

We never know when it will be somebody that we love that suffers from addiction. And what happens when that addiction takes over and leads to a set of unfortunate circumstances that end in incarceration? Do you want the person that you love to be at risk for the inhumane treatment and harm caused by the solitary confinement? Or do you want the person you love to receive the help they need to heal?

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I want the people I love to receive the help they need to heal. This is why I support LD 696.

Thank you.

Holly Reid, RN, MSN, MDiv

Ordained Pastor in the United Church of Christ

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