



Volunteers of America®

NORTHERN
NEW ENGLAND

February 17, 2022

Senator Susan Deschambault, Chair
Representative Charlotte Warrant, Chair
Committee on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 1552

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I write in support of LD 1552 in creating a Community-Based Reentry Services Account to offer competitive funding to increase critical social services to improve public safety.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that has over a decade of experience offering reentry services to incarcerated persons in Waldo County, Maine. We are one of only a handful of community-based nonprofit organizations in Maine offering reentry services to improve public safety, decrease recidivism, and improve the well-being of the program participants we serve. Unfortunately, Maine lacks a state-wide, comprehensive network of reentry social services, vocational and housing supports that make recovery possible.

With generous support from the Waldo County Sheriff's Department, VOA manages the Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center in Belfast, Maine. Our VOA Reentry Center is a residential center designed to give incarcerated men the skills and experience they need to live successfully as citizens and employees after they transition into their home communities. Each week, the men are provided with over 40 hours of treatment, and educational and vocational opportunities. Our evidence-based programming provides men with opportunities to practice newly acquired living skills and reduces recidivism.

“Your future success is our mission.” These are the first words seen as the men enter the program. Success is a partnership between the staff and residents. Case managers, therapists, and chaplains offer

social and case management support to allow each individual opportunities to re-engage their families, loved ones, seek employment, and find safe housing. Further, the VOA Reentry Center staff and program participants tend to the Reentry Garden in Swanville which produces over 100,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables every growing season. Our harvest feeds the residents of the Reentry Center and is donated to churches, community food pantries, and many other places in Belfast and neighboring communities.

Beyond the VOA Reentry Center, VOA also administers a mobile case management program that follows formerly incarcerated individuals into the community. With the goal of achieving positive outcomes in employment and housing stability, our VOA staff are dedicated to working with our participants to secure a new future for themselves that benefits public safety and recovery from substance use disorders.

LD 1552 would allow our state to expand the supply of reentry services which balances recovery and skill building to improve well-being with an eye toward public safety. The bill would allow for the delivery of a wide spectrum of services and essential direct support for these individuals, much like those already offered by VOA, including assessment, case management, system navigation supports, peer mentoring, housing stabilization services, vocational training access, parenting skills and substance use disorder recovery supports.

A whole-person approach is necessary if we are going to put people on the path toward lives that allow for meaningful community contribution. This bill also follows and will supplement the successful federal Second Chance Act that has been offering federal investments in evidence-based reentry services since signed into law by President Georg W. Bush in 2007. Creating the structures for reentry and providing public funding for these services is a wise investment to break the cycle of crime, improve public safety, and help people recover.

I would ask you to give this bill serious consideration. Thank you for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Hooks Wayman
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