

**Testimony for the 130<sup>th</sup> Session of the Maine Legislature  
Joint Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

**In support of LD 1552: An Act to Provide Reentry Services to Persons Reentering the Community after Incarceration.**

My name is Suzanne Rudalevige and I live in Cape Elizabeth.

I am so pleased to see a proposal that aims to create a funding source and structural shape for providing the needed services for persons leaving incarceration for life in the outside community.

When I was actively working as a justice advocate, quite a few years ago, I came to realize that, generally speaking, services for those leaving confinement depended on small outside agencies with a calling to this work, or, as a result of a grant which funded work and created pathways until the funding ran out - and the state did not see fit to fund what prison staff had painstakingly put together. In view of this bill, I have to assume this hasn't changed much.

Having a fund for this vital work, contributed to by the State and through the Department of Corrections making intentional efforts to apply for grants -particularly Federal grants in this specific area - is so needed to build a reliable and ongoing network of community services as described in this bill. (It's not as though we don't know what support people leaving confinement need!)

Moreover, creating this network and keeping it going, will give Maine a better chance of parting from our reliance on incarceration and keeping those who violate legal norms in the community, while they find the will and the way to change their lifestyles.

I support the various measures described in Paragraph 4, *Grant application and eligibility* but hope that some of the "experience" desired will not rule out new agencies setting up to meet these resource needs.

The reporting requirements (Paragraph 6) are strong and should be: this may necessitate some enforcement so that accurate and complete data are available for future grants.

The *next* step will be to monitor who is chosen to benefit from the services offered to make sure that services are available on an *equitable* needs- based basis among the population, which will likely be larger than funding can meet, at least at the outset.

Please recommend OTP. Thank you.