



**Maine Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network**
PO Box 8 Augusta ME 04330
www.muusan.org
info@muusan.org

February 18, 2022

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety committee:

My name is Leslie Runser and I live in South Portland. I am here today testifying in support of LD 1552 on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, known as MUUSAN. I have been a member of the Unitarian Universalist faith for over 25 years. LD 1552, An Act to Provide Reentry Services to Persons Reentering the Community after Incarceration, will provide continuous, coherent support to released inmates as they transition to life outside of prison. Most importantly, LD 1552 will help provide incarcerated individuals with the tools necessary to become contributing Maine citizens.

Over 95% of Maine's prison population will be released back into Maine communities. Currently, re-entry services are severely limited for most inmates. Often inmates leave their facility with no support structure in place. The issues and circumstances that worked to land them in prison in the first place are still with them. Sometimes, inmates have no place to go and end up on the streets. In the best case, inmates will be supported by family members, but this is not guaranteed and is not a permanent solution.

Under LD 1552, accredited community-based nonprofit and faith-based organizations will use federal grant money to provide reentry services to individuals reentering Maine communities. Incarcerated individuals will receive re-entry service assessments while they are still serving their sentences. These services will continue seamlessly after release, helping the released person to face the obligations and expectations of life on the outside.

This support and treatment will reduce recidivism. Repeat offenses cost our state a great deal of money; the average annual cost of incarceration at Maine State Prison is \$73,000! LD 1552 will also reduce the pain and suffering that recidivism causes all Maine citizens. Importantly, all proposed re-entry services will be tracked to ensure that recidivism rates decrease as a result of the increased services.

Upheld by my Unitarian Universalist values, I hold close to my promise as a citizen of this state and this country to be both compassionate and just to all in our society. I believe LD 1552 provides opportunity. The opportunity for the formerly incarcerated to become contributing members of our state. And, also, the opportunity for all Maine citizens to treat the formerly incarcerated with dignity and respect. I ask you to support LD 1552 so returning citizens have the opportunity to become contributing members in our Maine communities. Thank you.