

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety;

My name is Athena; I am a University of Maine graduate social work student and a resident of Bangor. I am writing today to provide written testimony to **support LD 1552, An Act To Provide Reentry Services to Persons Reentering the Community after Incarceration.**

Inaccessibility of effective reentry services sustains Maine's increasing recidivism rates and makes the idea of a successful reentry feel like a long shot. A large portion of Maine recidivism rates consists of those who have violated their technical conditions of release, such as failing a drug test, failure to report. <sup>1</sup>This cycle of punishment has proven to be ineffective, and disproportionality harms rural Mainers, Maine's female prison population, and Black people in Maine.

Transportation is a significant barrier for Mainers in rural parts of the state in reporting to probation officers and accessing resources and support after incarceration. Maine women after incarceration have unique needs and require specialized responses to reduce recidivism. BIPOC and Maine tribal populations continue to overrepresent Maines criminal justice system, Black people in Maine are 4 more times to get arrested after their release.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, racial data is not collected on recidivism trends to fully understand any disparities that impact BIPOC and Maine tribal populations upon reentry to the community. LD 1552 requires collecting data so we can begin to understand the racial disparities within this area of the criminal justice system and begin to understand recidivism trends in Maine.

As a Black woman, I know too well how societal systems can leave individuals feeling disenfranchised and disempowered. LD 1552 is the step in the right direction to begin implementing evidence-based practices to effectively support the wellbeing of people after incarceration. LD 1552 makes the idea of a successful reentry not feel like a long shot.

Sincerely,

Athena Witham

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<sup>1</sup> [https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/JR-Maine-Policy-Framework\\_FINAL.pdf](https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/JR-Maine-Policy-Framework_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/JR-in-Maine-second-presentation1.pdf>