

LD 756 An Act Regarding Criminal Services for Juveniles

Testimony of Christian Civic League of Maine – Neither for nor Against

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Carroll Conley, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Christian Civic League of Maine. I am submitting testimony *Neither for Nor Against* LD 756 An Act Regarding Criminal Services for Juveniles.

We have a moral obligation, as a society, to meet the needs of our children in the best way possible so they can grow and prosper. Incarcerating a young person simply because they need behavioral health treatment or are at risk of being a victim of trafficking is unacceptable. If the appropriate services to meet the needs of these at-risk youth are not available currently, we must do everything in our power to make them available.

We must adopt evidence-based programs to help kids who are in trouble and provide support to other kids before they get in trouble.

As I understand this legislation, it seeks to more fully resource programs and services in the community to serve at-risk youth, so that we are not left with the awful and unacceptable option of sending a young person into incarceration for their own safety or treatment. That is a commendable goal and one the Christian Civic League of Maine can support.

I am told that there is concern about closing Longcreek Juvenile Corrections facility. As I read the proposed amendment, I can find no mention of a proposed closure, only a list of community services to help with housing, behavioral health, and community services to support at risk youth.

The CCL has not had the time to develop an expertise in the specific recommendations, and as a result cannot endorse the proposal. We can, however, fully endorse the overarching goal of serving the needs of kids in our communities so they can move beyond their interactions with the legal system and live full and healthy lives.