

Testimony of Steven Matthew Clark

LD 178 An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Maine Criminal Justice Committee

Dear Members of the Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Steven Matthew Clark and I am writing to express my strong support for the LD 178 an Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration. This bill would reinstate parole in Maine, a critical step in ensuring that individuals like myself who have worked hard to rehabilitate and transform our lives would have the opportunity to rejoin society as productive and become contributing members.

I have been incarcerated for the past 18 years, and during this time, I have worked hard to better myself and to contribute positively to the lives of others. I have earned an associate's degree, two Bachelor's degrees, a Master's degree, and am currently working towards a PhD. I am also a volunteer, tutor, and recovery support specialist, and have worked with over 1500 people to help them on their path to recovery and reentry.

Additionally, I have earned several professional certifications, and have made valuable connections with people who want to support me in my efforts to be a contributing member of society upon my release. I have even met the woman who I hope to spend my life with, and I have a place to live.

I share all of this with you to emphasize the progress that can be made when incarcerated individuals are given the opportunity to work towards a better future. I am a prime example of what can be achieved with dedication, hard work, and support.

Despite all of the progress I have made, I still face the harsh reality that without parole, I may never have the chance to rejoin society. I have met the woman I hope to spend my life with and want to help my family and other individuals in prison find love and the encouragement to change. It is clear that more prison time is not the solution, and that the path to true rehabilitation and reentry is through support and the chance to prove ourselves..

However, despite my achievements, I remain incarcerated, unable to fully utilize my skills and talents to make a positive impact on society. I strongly believe that reinstating the parole system in Maine would provide individuals like myself with the opportunity to be released from prison

under supervision, and to continue our work towards rehabilitation and transformation outside of prison walls.

After spending years rehabilitating myself and transforming my life, I believe that more prison is not the solution. Rather, the solution is to let me be out and to be a contributing member of society who pays taxes, helps his family, and even helps my victim's mother the best I can.

If I were to be granted parole, it would mean the world to me. After spending nearly two decades in prison, I have transformed myself into a better person, with a new outlook on life, and a desire to contribute to society in a meaningful way. I am ready to put my education and experience to work, helping others and giving back to my community.

More than anything, I want to reconnect with my family and make up for lost time. I have missed so many important moments with my loved ones, and I am eager to rebuild those relationships and create new memories with them. I also have the opportunity to start a new life with the woman I love, and I am ready to take on the responsibility of being a supportive partner and contributing member of our community.

I understand that parole is not a guarantee of freedom, but I am willing to do whatever it takes to prove that I am a worthy candidate for release. I am committed to continuing my education and personal growth, and to using my skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on the world. I hope that you will consider reinstating parole in Maine, and that I will have the chance to show you that I am ready to be a productive member of society once again.

When I am released, I plan to use my lived experience of incarceration to help others who are currently incarcerated or who have recently been released. As someone who has spent 18 years in prison, I understand the struggles and challenges that people face when they are incarcerated, and I also know firsthand how difficult it can be to adjust to life outside of prison.

As a consultant and teacher, I would draw on my personal experiences to help others navigate the complex and often confusing process of reentry. I would work with individuals to identify their strengths and skills and help them develop a plan for achieving their goals. I would also provide practical advice on everything from finding housing and employment to accessing healthcare and social services.

In addition to one-on-one consulting, I would also like to develop educational programs to help people in prison and their families. These programs would be designed to provide practical information and guidance on a range of topics, from financial literacy and career development to mental health and addiction recovery.

Ultimately, my goal would be to help people who are currently incarcerated or who have recently been released to not only survive but thrive. By sharing my own experiences and insights, I hope

to inspire and empower others to make positive changes in their lives and become active and engaged members of their communities.

I urge you to support LD 178 and to reinstate the parole system in Maine. Doing so would provide hope and opportunity for individuals who have worked hard to rehabilitate themselves, and would promote the values of justice and fairness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.