

Karri Clohosey

Topsham, ME

Testimony in Favor of LD 178

An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

Dear Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee and honorable members of the Maine State legislature. I submit this testimony in favor of LD 178.

I write to you as a Maine resident with almost 30 years in the field of social services who has seen incarceration's impact on those in custody, their families, and their communities. The 'correctional' system works best when incentives for corrective behavior exist. Most recently I have been working with individuals from the Maine State Prison and the Maine Correctional Center / Southern Maine Women's Reentry Center who are engaged in prison education programs in pursuit of higher education. I have seen the power of hope and transformation when you invest in solutions to justice that go beyond the status quo, and when you believe in people.

There are so many incarcerated residents who are desperately seeking pathways to a second chance, a chance to do better. Programs and initiatives within jails and prisons just cannot meet these needs, and those that exist often do not always promote the accountability that they set out to. The mission statement of the Maine Department of Corrections states **"Making our communities safer by reducing harm through supportive intervention, empowering change, and restoring lives."** Parole does all of this as well as incentivizing accountability for conduct. Hope promotes transformation.

I have also worked with forensic patients, the severe and persistent mentally ill, at Riverview Psychiatric Center, encountering some of the most challenging cases when it comes to decisions around public safety. I understand firsthand, the critical deliberation in decisions around community integration for those who have committed crimes. LD 178 mandates DOC supervision following release and provides careful protocol to protect the public from those who pose a threat through disqualification. LD 178 offers a pathway toward more effective and efficient rehabilitation and supported reentry into the community.

At a time when there is a political movement to be “tough on crime,” public officials are called to enact legislation that promotes true safety and justice, not just policy decisions that promote this agenda at face value. We must move away from knee-jerk decisions that are based on punitive models which cost taxpayers more money in the end and do not effectively reach goals of safety and justice. Consider recidivism rates. Incarceration is not the answer to public safety, behavioral transformation, or lasting justice. Careful integration plans such as those enacted through parole incentivize positive behavior and promote healing and rehabilitation. For these reasons, I ask that you respectfully pass LD 178.

Sincerely,

Karri Clohosey

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