

Amy Frankel
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March 12, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am a PhD student and part-time faculty at the University of Maine, Orono. My PhD dissertation is focused on reentry in the state of Maine. As a resident of Knox County and a licensed master of social work (LMSW) in the state of Maine, I am requesting your consideration and support for LD 178 – An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community.

Reentering citizens lack support with employment, housing, family engagement, access to healthcare and mental health resources, and treatment for substance use. Pathways must exist for folks to be able to address these needs. LD 178 will address these challenges and I hope we can count on this committee to move it forward. This bill will allow returning citizens to receive the support and structure they need in each stage of their reentry process which will improve their chances of making successful transitions back into our communities.

Whenever residents of Maine face hardships, the people of Maine rally around them and their families to provide support. Let's together make sure that returning citizens are offered the same level of concern. Most of these individuals are Mainers who came from our communities and they return to our communities. It is our collective responsibility to focus our attention on them and develop these essential resources to provide support for adults returning to our cities, towns and neighborhoods.

I have spent the past three years working with nonprofit organizations to support reentry efforts in our state. Through these organizations, I have met and worked with individuals who have recently completed a term of incarceration in Maine. Initially withdrawn and anxious about their return to their communities, through their access to networks of supportive organizations, they have become more confident, obtained full-time employment, and are hopeful about the future. The support and encouragement they have received has allowed them to move beyond the circumstances and experience of their incarceration and presented them with opportunities to focus on the next phase of their lives. As wonderful as these stories are, they do not reflect the experience of most reentering citizens and these resources are not scalable. My hope is that many more returning citizens in our communities will have access to a better level of support during their reentry process.

This legislation has the ability to transform the lives of individuals worthy of our support who are eager to become part of the social fabric of society. LD 178 will make successful reentry a priority and allow the state of Maine to reduce barriers and ease some of the challenges faced by returning citizens.

Thank you for reviewing my letter to support LD 178.

Sincerely,

Amy Frankel

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