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Times have changed. And by "times" I mean the last 200 years of incarceration! In multiple cultures worldwide we have learned that our personalities, our behaviors change permanently as an expression of neuroplasticity. Although clearly an evolving science, the intentionality of neuroscience suggests that Departments of Correction can now do what their title suggests; and that is to make corrections in the brain functions of those people who have made bad decisions. Not only is this possible, it is now measurable. For example: the national recidivism rate for previously incarcerated individuals is approximately 67%. The recidivism rate for prison residents who have completed a higher education degree and been released is approximately 5%. Notwithstanding the many nuances that make up those resident populations, those are the facts. Can we conclude that people change? I believe so. And because I believe this to be true we can now consider parole as a reasonable alternative to incarceration for those who have changed permanently prior to their arbitrary release date. Obviously, a host of psychological testing must be applied in order to guarantee, to the extent possible, permanent neurological (personality) change; however, the testing is possible if we choose to make it so. What better time to consider parole; in fact, it is the only time to consider parole and that is when residents have changed and no longer are likely to make bad decisions. 67% recidivism? Where's the "corrections" in that? versus 5% recidivism... The option for parole must be made available because the science of how people change points to the simple fact that incarceration is no longer necessary.

(Please note that although I serve as Chair of the Maine State Prison Board of Visitors, my comments above are purely my own and in no way represent the thoughts of the Board membership or the Maine State Prison.)