

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

I must start by thanking the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, the Commission to Examine Re-establishing Parole, the Maine Department of Corrections, and the Maine State Prison for allowing me to show my support for LD 178.

Special thanks to Mr. Jeffrey Evangelos, former Maine State Representative, and thousands of incarcerated and non-incarcerated citizens, well-wishers, and volunteers for your leadership, empathy, and hard work in our effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

My name is Nadim Haque, and I have been in Maine State Prison, Warren, for almost 26 of the 56 years of my life. I am a convicted felon, sentenced to a 50-year prison term for murder and aggravated assault I committed in 1996.

You will be surprised to learn that part of my prison experience has been quite beneficial. Thanks to DOC which offers excellent rehabilitative, educational, job, and life skills programs, I am now a certified Peer Educator, Substance use Recovery Coach, Adult Literacy Educator, Volunteer Master Gardener, and Beekeeper. I am also in the middle of completing my degree in Organizational Studies and Leadership from the University of Southern Maine. I work as a tutor/mentor in the education department, volunteer at the MSP community gardens, and facilitate reading programs for the Maine Humanities Council. ***I did all this with the knowledge that I may never get out of this prison and that if I would, I will be well into my seventies.***

I acknowledge the terrible harm caused by my actions and recognize that punishment is necessary to satisfy the compelling needs of the victim and the legitimate right of the community and the broader society to express its anger and outrage in response to those harms. Legal and political philosophers have embraced the principles of punishment and redemption as a part of a fair justice system. However, Maine's current sentencing scheme has no provision for incarcerated residents to demonstrate their ability to earn a chance at redemption. Simply put, ***I cannot change my past, and Maine has no option but to continue to judge me by the worst thing I have done.***

Re-establishing parole provides a proper balance between honoring the rights of the victims, protecting communities, and punishing offenders. At the same time recognizing the power of redemption and the value of rehabilitation. This bill actualizes the mission of the Maine Department of Corrections: ***"Making our communities safer by reducing harm through supportive intervention, empowering change and restoring lives."***

I respectfully plea that you please vote in support of LD178; and add the requirement: "An inmate who satisfies all criteria for parole eligibility could be paroled even though He or She is subject to an immigration and naturalization service detainer." This provision will allow non-citizens, as well the citizens, to participate in the parole process.

Respectfully,

Nadim Haque
Maine State Prison

Nadim Haque
Warren
LD 178

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