

To Whom It May Concern,

As a concerned citizen of Maine, I am writing to support the reinstatement of parole in our state. This change is necessary to improve the criminal justice system, save money, and give individuals who have made mistakes a chance to rebuild their lives.

As a teenager, I had the eye-opening opportunity to work with an incarcerated man while on a work release program. I witnessed his transition back into society firsthand. The experience gave me my first glimpse of the power of rehabilitation and the resilience of the human spirit. Through hard work, dedication, and the support of others, he overcame many hurdles. He became a fully functioning and positive member of society. It was inspiring to see how he had taken responsibility for his past mistakes and actively worked towards a better future.

Studies have shown that people who are granted parole are 36% less likely to return to prison than those released with zero supervision. This statistic alone is a compelling reason to bring back parole. Moreover, parole saves money and boosts the economy since incarcerating someone is nine times more expensive than supervising them on parole.

I have been following Leo Hylton's column about the urgent need for parole in Maine. This incarcerated man recently received his master's degree. I was particularly moved by his recent anecdote about a man named Joe who chose to die in prison rather than burden his family. At the same time, he was legally capable of being home with them. This story is just one example of the inhumanity of our current system. Too many people die in prison without family, support, or hope.

As a lifelong citizen of Maine, I want to see our state take a more humane approach to criminal justice. We must acknowledge the humanity that exists even within those who've created the greatest harm in our communities. Rather than ostracizing and excommunicating them, let us imagine a future where, in the wake of harm, the focus is shifted to restoring, healing, and transforming individuals and relationships.

While we work toward transforming the system, let's start with creating opportunities for incarcerated people to begin paying their debt to society. Right now, you are paying their debt to society. I believe that parole is the best way to do this.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I urge you to take action to bring back parole in Maine.

Sincerely,

Makaila Hickey

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Orono, ME