

Nazl Konya
Waterville
LD 178

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

My name is Nazlı Konya. I am a resident of Waterville and I teach at Colby College.

I am writing to you to show my absolute support for LD178 and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

I support this bill because of my teaching experience at the Maine State Prison. This past fall, as part of Colby's prison education program, I taught a course on feminism in a class of twelve, with seven MSP-resident students and five students enrolled on Colby campus. The class met twice a week for from September to December. Eight times we all met in person at MSP; other times we were on Zoom.

Based on my experience at MSP and my former prison-education experience outside Maine, I can confidently say that all incarcerated individuals I've met demonstrate unmatched levels of self-reflection and growth, kindness, respect, and humanistic sociability that are in fact harder to find in colleges. All of them are earnestly trying to improve their conditions of life. Their shared goal is, first, to flourish inside the prison, by learning, thinking, engaging in discussion, and collaborating with each another; and second, to have better professional opportunities upon re-entry and to prepare themselves for living in a world, which, for most of them, looks tremendously different.

In their strivings, I see why they should return home: Many people I've met in prison are ready to continue their journeys in redemption and repair outside while reintegrating into their families and communities. My years of prison education have shown me the enormous human potential and beauty that are separated from communities outside. So many incarcerated people possess a great potential to contribute to their communities, with much love and commitment, after years of serving long sentences. Under the current law in Maine, people both inside and outside are deprived of that tremendous potential, as they also suffer emotional debility and financial strain.

Pass LD178 – give incarcerated people and their families, communities, loved ones the hope they all need. With hope, everyone can move from hurt to healing and well-being.

Thank you for your work and for considering my opinion.