

From Marshall G. Mercer
To: Maine Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee
RE :LD 178

Dear Honorable members of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee, my name is Marshall G. Mercer.

I am the Executive Director of Hope Brokers Inc, a 501)3c- non profit that focuses on the marginalized & vulnerable populations of Maine. I am also an advocate & community organizer as well as a junior in Psychology & community studies at the University of Maine at Machias & a well known leader in my community through my actions not my words,

I am also a person of recovery & a former slave to this system that was designed to keep people like me in a vicious cycle of recidivism. I am here today in support of LD-178, an act to support reentry & reintegration. As a person that was formerly incarcerated. I understand the challenges first-hand one must conquer to reestablish oneself back into society.

What I knew of society was already a twisted version of someone else's truth before ever entering into the belly of the beast.- what society calls prison. While there we must adapt to our environments, regardless of what the cruel reality of the environment may be.

So if one can succeed and rise above the challenges that are placed in front of them, then that person deserves a second chance. I believe reinstating parole could be that 2nd chance a person that has been incarcerated for a longtime should be able to get if such person has raised to the occasion

I was given a second chance to become a beacon light for my community and not for one second have I squandered a bit of that chance that was given to me. Reinstating parole in Maine is a crucial step towards ensuring that the people who have served time in prison have a fair chance at successfully reintegrating back into society.

Parole Provides a Mechanism for individuals to be released from prison before their full sentence has been served, but with conditions they must follow in order for them to remain free, from regular check-ins with the parole officer, treatment, counseling and avoidances of certain activities or individuals.

According to the Maine Department of Corrections the recidivism rate of people who leave Maine's prisons is 46%, which means almost half the people released from Maine's prisons return within 3 years!

This is Unacceptable. Time for something new. There are people in prison right now I know personally that could be more useful to society as a whole than in a prison cell & could be if let go on parole.

People Like Steve Clark who has helped me help others re-enter society and stay connected while I was running the Downeast Recovery Support Center in Machias.

Steven Clark has just recently earned his masters degree while serving his time, instead of wasting it. We here in the reentry community are very proud of Steven Clark for his accomplishments & would love to see what he could do on the streets if let on parole. & Steve is just one of many that has devoted his life while inside of the prison systems of Maine.

In such cases as Steve & many others who has raised to the occasion as you will hear or have heard from my friends who stood in front of me and comes after me today, parole would positively impact the people given it & our Maine Communities, as they would be getting helpers of the community with lived experience & education that would be unique in many different ways.

We believe people like Steven Clark, Leo Hylton & many others that have raised themselves above the status quo should get a second chance. In closing I urge members of the committee to support LD 178 and the reinstatement of Parole in Maine.

This bill has the potential to positively impact countless individuals who are in the process of re-entry and can help reduce the recidivism rates and promote public safety. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Executive Director of Hope Brokers Inc

Hopebroker63@gmail.com

207-242-5972

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Augusta
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