

March 13, 2023

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

Re: LD 178

My name is Diane Oltarzewski and I reside in Belfast, ME. I wholeheartedly support the reestablishment of a parole system in Maine as soon as possible for offenders who pose no threat to the public.

The recent Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole found that “disparities in the racial demographics among those incarcerated in Maine and the general population are staggering.” Even as the leadership of our Department of Corrections introduces enlightened concepts treating each individual as a human being with dignity and respect, often with certain needs for treatment and support, we see in the press appalling accounts of the racist, demeaning culture within the guard staff that will only change with better screening and training.

For a person who has erred but can be released with support and supervision, the less time they spend in such an alienating and demeaning atmosphere, the better. Otherwise, we are just reinforcing reactive negative behavior.

Please vote ought to pass for LD 178. Thank you.