

To whom it may concern,

My name is Savannah Smith. I'm currently serving 20 all but 10 years with 4 years of probation in Maine Correctional Center for Manslaughter. I have been incarcerated since April 4th, 2019. The crime that I was charged with happened in October of 2017. Two weeks after my 20th birthday. In between these years, I stayed in the same town where my crime happened knowing I was the prime suspect and tried to live a "normal" life. I didn't run away from my problems; I stayed in town facing what I did every day, waiting for the consequences of my actions to meet up with me. I did NOT go near the victim's family or harass them in anyway. I did live near the victim's grandmother in the same housing complex, as soon as I saved enough money from working as a Closing Manager at McDonald's, I moved immediately so she could grieve in peace. I didn't get in any trouble with the police at this time till my arrest nor had I before my crime happened. I struggled with addiction to marijuana since late middle school and explored around in other hard drugs during the time of my crime.

When I was arrested in April 2019 I thought this was a chance to sit back and figure out why my life was going the way it was and to become a better member of society for when I get home. So that's what I've been doing. I have taken most of the classes available like Philosophy Of Love with the College of MIT, New Freedom, Grieving Loss of Children, Moving On (class on Domestic Violence), Diversity, I'm also a Certified Recovery Coach, I worked in Industries where I made over 6,000 masks for residents at the prison, and children in school. I also have taken a lot more classes at MCC. As I did in Hancock County and Two Bridges Regional Jail like Anger Management, Introduction to College, Art, I started sewing masks at Two Bridges for the Correction Officers, school, daycares, and the homeless. etc. I have also started college again, in 2016 I was attending Beal College for Medical Assisting while raising my year-old daughter by myself. Working, being a single mom, and going to school was a lot at once but I wanted to be something for my daughter other than a struggling single mother. I now attend Washington County Community College taking an Associate of Applied Science in Human

Services/Certificate in Substance Use & Recovery. I will be expected to graduate from WCCC in 2024.

After that, I plan to attend the University of Maine in Augusta for my bachelor's degree in Applied Science in Human Services. Last semester, fall 2022 I was on the President's List in my school and received a 4.0 GPA.

My biggest accomplishment right now is that I found a HEALTHY way to stay sober; I stopped the Suboxone program after being on it for a year. I decided that it wasn't the best fit for me and I really didn't need the medication. I have been off Suboxone for about 7 months, and I haven't felt better. I use the gym as my own "recovery center". It has worked for my physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. It's important to find something that works for you so you know that you will not relapse when transitioning back to the community. We get urinalysis monthly and since the Women's Center is a smaller unit some people get picked every time. Like I do, but for myself I don't mind the tests because it keeps me in line and on a strict pathway that I feel like I do need. I've passed every urinalysis since I have been in prison. The judge at my sentencing said that rehabilitation is important in my case, and I have held onto these words since. Every class I've taken is because I wanted to take it and because I'm taking all the principles that are given to me to make me a better person from when I am home. And I can use these tools/ skills to help others around me.

I know for myself, and other women incarcerated we could be doing a lot more if we were to have Parole in Maine. Helping our community by working and attending school and doing more for our families. My mother, brother, and baby sister have lived in Tennessee for over six years now. I saw my mother for the first time in person in over 5 years and got to meet my new baby sister in September of 2022. Which was my first contact visit since I've been incarcerated. Words couldn't explain the feeling of seeing your family, it gives us courage, strength, and most importantly the love that we need to continue to push on.

I know many women and men who have come in and out of incarceration, but I can't tell you I've met someone who was a "Long timer" (meaning 10 years or more) and seen or heard in my stay in prison that they have come back or reoffend with the same crime. I believe that this is really important to hear because we have learned our lesson and we are so incredibly sorry for what we have done. We know that we didn't just hurt one person, we affected a whole family, all their friends, and their whole community. I do receive my 9 good days off a month yet it's not just given to you when you first get here. Not till over a year ago they decided to let full time college students who were allowed their 9 good days off eligible for the 9. Most long timers only receive a maximum of 5 good days off a month and no more. Before receiving 9 days off a month for school up at the Women's Center, getting the 9 days off a month was only for residents that are at Pre-release (SMWRC). There are no classes here that are about Victims and how our actions affect them, their families, the people around them, and their communities. BUT it also affects our families and friends. I think that this is a must for Long Timers and/or anyone who commits a crime. We need to know that our actions do affect others and why and how. This will put a different mindset into the offender's head before they do something that is illegal again.

Giving Parole back to Maine would give inmates a chance to show the community the better person that they have become. It would give us a chance to give back to the community, work in the community so we can pay taxes, and it would let us have a stronger bond with our families. Times have come a long way and bringing Parole back could be the next big step to bringing both prison communities and outside communities together as one. I refused to be defined as my charge that I made when I just turned 20 years old, I'm more WAY than that. I take full accountability for my actions. I take ownership that an innocent life was lost because of my CHOICES and ACTIONS. And from the bottom of my heart, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry to the victim, to the family and to everyone. Thank you.