

Josh Miller
Sabattus
LD 1633

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

My name is Josh Miller and I reside in Sabattus. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1633, An Act to Establish a Community-Based Reentry Program in All Department of Corrections Facilities. As someone who is in long-term recovery and has experienced incarceration and navigated the challenges of reentering society, I understand firsthand the importance of providing adequate support to those transitioning back into their communities.

I'm a licensed social worker, substance use counselor, Charles W. Colson Scholarship awardee- which attributes to my Christian faith and worldview that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and support as lives can be transformed, and have previously worked for the State of Maine. I'm also in the minority class in Maine, being 50 percent hispanic coming from a parent who was a first generation American- I point this out as minorities are disproportionately represented within the criminal justice system and face additional barriers to reentry. Additionally, I recently received a Governor's Pardon in Pennsylvania, which will seal my felony 1 conviction and provide me with the opportunity to expunge my record. I know firsthand the struggles of reentering into the community after incarceration, and I have seen the positive impact of second chances on individuals and their families. I highlight this information with you to share my personal and professional experiences that give me credibility on this subject.

Establishing a community-based reentry program- something new and unique as it will strategically be a partnership with the DOC and a community based organization will be extremely beneficial for not only those reentering back into the community, but for society at large. Once again, I repeat, establishing this will be extremely beneficial for both the individuals reentering and the communities throughout Maine, as these individuals aren't former "convicts" but rather future neighbors. After release, individuals face numerous barriers, including finding employment and housing, rebuilding relationships, and addressing mental health or addiction issues. Many lack access to the necessary support systems, which can lead to recidivism and a cycle of incarceration. Establishing a community-based reentry program will help close the gaps on the above mentioned barriers.

I respectfully request that the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety consider my testimony and pass LD 1633. This program is essential in providing the guidance and support needed for individuals to successfully reintegrate into society and reduce recidivism.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Josh Miller