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United Way
of Southern Maine



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

My name is Devon Stockmayer. I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street in Portland. I am writing to ask for your support in the passage of LD1514: An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities.

Many of the clients we serve at Preble Street have experienced incarceration, as well as what is often referred to as the “revolving door” between prisons and homeless shelters. No one should have to exist in this dangerous limbo. In the absence of meaningful support from either side of the system, individuals frequently become caught up in the same kinds of matters that landed them in prison in the first place, resulting in their return to incarceration.

The transitional housing proposed in LD1514 offers the state of Maine an incredible opportunity to begin to reshape a carceral system that is, in many ways, designed for recidivism. We must show individuals that we believe in them upon release. Belief begins with a strong foundation. Housing is the cornerstone to a foundation upon which to rebuild a life after being released from a correctional facility. Indeed, a 2018 report from the Prison Policy Initiative found that formerly incarcerated individuals are more than ten times more likely to experience homelessness than those who have not been incarcerated. On a national level, over 50,000 people enter homeless shelters directly from correctional facilities annually. Until now, we have failed to provide a viable housing option for reentry to individuals who do not have the familial or socioeconomic support to obtain their own housing.

LD1514 is a chance for individuals to land on their feet. Though two months is not long at all, for many it could mean the difference between an apartment of their own and a shelter cot. There are many further steps we can take to strengthen the supports we offer to individuals trying to rebuild their lives after prison, but LD1514 is a groundbreaking step in the right direction.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Devon Stockmayer

