

Rob Korobkin
Courage House - Gorham, ME

Hello. My name is Rob Korobkin.

I'm the owner-operator of the Courage House in Gorham. Courage House is a 20 bed residential program for men transitioning out of Maine's jails and prisons, and reentering back into our communities.

I'm here today to speak in favor of LD 1301.

To begin with, as I'm sure you all know, this country has three tiers of correctional institutions. County jails. State penitentiaries. And federal penitentiaries. One thing that you may not know, however, is that of the three tiers, only two have funds set aside for transitional housing and other transitional programming.

At the federal level, that's the Second Chance Act - \$85 Million a year, nationwide, to pay for folks leaving federal prisons. When somebody comes to Courage House from a federal prison, this money often pays for their first two months in the house. At the county level, the organization Maine Pretrial Services has secured a variety of grants to bail Mainers out of our state's county jails and get them into recovery. They can often cover a few months for the Courage House residents coming out of county jails.

Where things fall apart is with the folks transitioning out of Maine's state penitentiaries. At present, there simply is no money in the Maine state budget to cover the cost of things like housing vouchers for the men and women transitioning out of Maine's state penitentiaries. This year has actually been great with the COVID rent relief funds, which have paid for several months at a time, but it shouldn't take a global pandemic for the government to put a roof over the heads of the incredibly vulnerable men and women who are transitioning out of Maine's state prisons.

In practice, the long term benefits of transitional housing programs like Courage House are clear. On average, it costs the State of Maine \$50,000 to incarcerate someone for a year. Transitional programs like Courage House can operate pretty comfortably at \$600 a month per person, or \$7,200 a year, instead. As I see it, when formerly incarcerated Mainers can transition back into our workforce as employees and small business owners, when they can transition back into our communities as our neighbors, when they can transition back into caring for their families as parents, we all win.

That's why whether it's LD 1301 or something else, if we want there to be genuine support available for the men and women transitioning out of Maine's state prisons, it's worth investing significant resources in making that support a reality. I'd love to see LD 1301 come about in a way that does just that. Thanks.