



To: Senator Anne Carney, Senate Chair of the Judiciary Committee
Representative Amy Kuhn, House Chair of the Judiciary Committee
Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Date: January 8th, 2026

RE: LD 1941 - An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kage Johnson, and I am a resident of Winslow, Maine. I am here today testifying in favor of LD 1941 on behalf of Healing First! and as an individual; I am also a steering committee member of the Maine Restorative Justice Coalition (MERJ), the Maine state chapter representative of the global coalition, Survivors For Justice Reform, and a survivor of serious harm, including assault and rape. We are in full and earnest support of LD 1941.

Healing First!, a Maine-based transformative justice collective led by survivors of serious harm, including sexual assault, intimate/domestic partner violence, and gun violence, has come to be because we see an immense need to claim a public collective voice as survivors who want restorative approaches and healing-based alternatives to incarceration in the wake of harm. This includes being in favor of parole. We wish to underscore that LD 1941 includes multiple provisions which ensure that the parole process is considerate and caring to those who have been victims of crime.

For a long time now, we have witnessed the many ways in which our current system, including the use of incarceration, especially long-term, responds to harm with more harm, without providing accountability, healing, or justice. The criminal legal system has largely failed us. The use of dehumanization, isolation, and punishment enacted through incarceration and longer sentences has not and will not lead us to a world free from violence and crime.

We must reckon with the fact that incarceration, especially long-term, causes further harm not only to those who are incarcerated, but to their loved ones and communities;

incarceration tears families apart, forcing loved ones to go through life without incarcerated loved ones present. This trauma contributes to cycles and generations of harm. We need to invest in and expand rehabilitative, restorative options. Parole allows incarcerated people to return to their homes, jobs and loved ones, while getting support to make their transition back to community successful. Other states, such as Mississippi, who also abolished parole back in 1995, have brought back parole—successfully lightening the load on overburdened prisons and state budgets.

Currently, *Maine has the harshest sentencing in the entire country*. Maine does not offer parole—a key incentive for incarcerated people to engage in self-improvement and become better members of their communities. Withholding parole and prolonging reentry is damaging and counterproductive to rehabilitation and fostering healthy communities. *Parole is vital.*

According to a 2024 report by the Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) and Crime Survivors in Safety and Justice: “*1 in 3 people in the US have been a victim of violent crime in the last decade. Only 16% of victims of violent crime believe that longer prison sentences are the most effective crime prevention strategy.*” When it comes to keeping people locked up long-term—We, survivors, say no; not in our name, not under the guise of “public safety.”

We must also acknowledge that incarceration, especially long-term, is a massive waste of our financial resources and tax dollars, as the average cost of incarcerating just one person in Maine is around \$117,000 per year. Healing First! would much rather see our precious financial resources going to programs that would genuinely foster and increase opportunities to experience justice, accountability, and healing, such as through restorative justice programs and greater rehabilitation, reentry, and community supports like job training, mental health, and substance use treatment, etc. and to parole, which encourages people to return as active and engaged members of their communities.

I passionately restate Healing First!’s position of being in full support of LD 1941. It is time for Maine to catch up with other states across the entire country who are investing in genuine pathways for justice, accountability, healing, and rehabilitation versus wasting our resources on longer incarceration, which only causes further harm and truly offers no benefit to anyone. We urge you to invest in healthy communities—and not prolonged, harmful carcerality—by voting in favor of LD 1941. On behalf of Healing First!, we thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Kage Johnson, on behalf of Healing First!

Citation:

Alliance for Safety and Justice. (2024). Crime survivors speak.

<https://asj.allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/crime-survivors-speak-2024/>.