

Testimony in support of LD1941: An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

I am here to ask that you reinstate parole in the state of Maine. If a primary reason to not support parole is fear of individuals reoffending and public safety, I am here to demonstrate how that argument does not hold up to scrutiny.

If an individual is slated to serve their sentence without the possibility of parole, there is no motivation to engage in rehabilitation programming. They have no reason to *not* engage in misconduct while in prison which can lead to unsafe prison environments. There is no evaluation of their readiness to return to their community once their sentence is served. They are then released into the community with no oversight of their behavior and no support in this momentous transition. This leads to high recidivism rates and high costs for taxpayers.

Conversely, an individual with the potential to be released on parole has every reason to engage in as much programming as possible to prove their readiness to reengage in their community without reoffending. They are motivated to have positive conduct while incarcerated. They must prove to a parole board that they are ready to reenter society and not reoffend. They are then released with oversight to monitor their behavior, ensure compliance, and provide access to resources.

Until recently we did not have hard evidence of the impact of parole on reoffending. Research now shows that “those released to parole supervision have lower recidivism rates than those who complete their sentence in prison. In one state, prisoners who were released under supervision were 36% less likely to be reincarcerated than their peers who served out their full sentences and had no supervision after release” (Prison Fellowship).

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation discovered that despite the significant increase in the number of parole grants to inmates serving long sentences (8,000 parole grants in the last 10 years) “the recidivism rates for these formerly incarcerated persons remains very low, at two to four percent for general recidivism and less than one percent for recidivism involving felony crimes against person” (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation).

A study by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found an 18.2% reduction of imprisonment a year after release for those under supervised release compared to those without. They found that “parole was particularly effective in reducing serious offending” (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2022). Overall supervised offenders are less likely to reoffend at 12-, 24- and 36-months post-release, which demonstrates the value of community supervision in breaking the cycle of reoffending among high-risk groups (Wai-Yin et al. 2014).

Research in Quebec, Canada between 2007 and 2021 found that parole decreases recidivism by more than 8 percentage points within five years and reduces the likelihood of committing further crimes” (Arbour and Marchand 2022).

Personally, I have witnessed the value of parole. A dear friend of mine received a 25 year to life prison sentence for first degree murder when she was 15 years old. She was released on parole in April of 2023. She is currently working full-time supporting others in this transition from prison and has not had one infraction since being released. This would not have been possible without all the extensive mental health, life skills, and educational programming she participated in while incarcerated and the ongoing support she has acquired from her parole officer.

Not having parole in the state of Maine, costs taxpayers more money, increases danger to public safety, and just does not make sense. Please support reinstating parole in the state of Maine.

Nicole Coffey Kellett

Sources

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