

Erica King
Portland
LD 1941

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Erica King, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine, a mother, a social worker, a national policy expert, and a colleague of some of Maine's most brilliant, employed and incarcerated residents. I work with people with long sentences who work remotely, have never had disciplinary actions, contribute to the health and safety of the staff and their fellow residents, and pay their taxes to the state of Maine. If you knew them, you would want them as your neighbor, too. I am writing today in absolute support of LD 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole. This legislation is a critical step forward for our state, offering a common-sense solution rooted in fiscal responsibility, family unity, and basic human dignity.

LD 1941 is an "exit ramp" that brings Maine's criminal justice policy in line with the majority of the nation. Maine abolished parole in 1976 and bringing it back is a long-overdue reform. Our state would be following the precedent of others, like Mississippi, that restored parole after acknowledging the failure of parole-free sentencing.

The economic benefits of reestablishing parole are substantial and cannot be overstated. Restoring parole is an investment in our communities, not just an expense:

- **Taxpayer Savings:** The annual cost of parole in other states is estimated to be only 10–12% of the cost of incarceration. By releasing people on parole, the annual savings could amount to approximately \$13.3 million (based on the estimated \$78,000 it costs to incarcerate one person for a year).
- **Economic Growth:** Economists estimate that the release of just 100 people on parole would generate \$14.7 million annually for the state economy, leading to an aggregate \$28 million addition to Maine's economy. This is money that would otherwise be spent on incarceration but will instead be returned to the state to be spent on housing, food, and other necessities.

Beyond the clear tax savings, the re-establishment of parole offers significant benefits to the families of incarcerated people, who are an often-overlooked source of support in our communities:

- **Strength and Support of Maine Families:** Parole reintroduces the missing presence of a supportive parent or loved one to the family unit. The strain of extended separation, including the emotional impact and the burden of living on a single income, weighs heavily on spouses and children. Restoring parole supports family bonds, which are critical for successful reentry.

- **Hope and Motivation for those Who Have Earned It:** Parole gives people in prison the opportunity to earn an early return to their community and the hope of a second chance. This hope is a powerful motivator for rehabilitation, encouraging individuals to complete education, programming, and work skills training while incarcerated. Finally, the return to parole is simply the more humane approach to justice. It is a major tool for both rehabilitation and public safety that Maine has been missing. Parole allows the justice system to individualize sentences, considering the growth and transformation a person has achieved during incarceration, rather than only relying on the original offense. By creating a pathway for review by a board of professionals, we create a healthier, more humane community for all.

I urge you to vote "Ought To Pass" on LD 1941.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Erica King