

Leslie Manning
Manchester
LD 1941

To the members of the Judiciary Committee,
Thank you for your service to all the people in Maine. I am Leslie Manning of Manchester, an interfaith chaplain and recorded minister in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, their loved ones and family members and in making our communities more welcoming. I have been coordinating meetings of the women residents at both the Southern Maine Women's Re-entry Center (SMWRC) and the Women's Center since 2018. Based on my knowledge and experience, I offer full support of LD 1941 and ask you to approve the restoration of parole in Maine.

You will hear many compelling reasons for why an impartial board that is accountable to the Governor and Legislature is a far more effective (and cost effective) system than the current process of community confinement, but the most compelling is the fact that over 90% of those currently incarcerated in our jails and prisons do return to our communities, our workplaces and our educational institutions. Parole and preparation for successful reintegration through programming and work opportunities are the most effective means of achieving success.

Prisons represent the failures of many systems, family breakdowns, addiction, mental health and education among them. Why else do we use one of the measures to determine the future needs of beds for our prisons and jails, which is fourth grade reading scores? Yes, we know by fourth grade who is likely to make it and who isn't-what if we used the resources we currently spend on warehousing people to provide alternatives and supplemental support to prevent that anticipated outcome? Parole is but one tool to achieve the successful re-entry of those who no longer pose a threat to public safety and are actively participating in their own rehabilitation. Please vote ought to pass LD 1941.