

Lisa Parisi
Sanford
LD 1911

Public Testimony in Support of Establishing Parole in Maine

Chair, distinguished members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lisa Parisi and I am here to speak in strong support of establishing parole in Maine.

I am testifying not just as a resident, but as someone who has seen firsthand how the absence of parole impacts real people, real families, and real communities. I have watched people change—truly change—through treatment, education, accountability, and time, yet still have no pathway to demonstrate rehabilitation or come home under supervision. That deeply affects not only the individual but everyone around them.

Maine Is One of the Only States With No Parole. That Makes Us Less Safe.

Many people don't realize that Maine is one of a small handful of states without a traditional parole system. That means people are released at the very end of their sentences without any supervision, without structured support, and without accountability during reintegration.

Research from states with parole is clear:

- Individuals released under parole supervision have lower recidivism rates than those released without supervision.
- Supervision allows for treatment continuity, drug testing, employment support, and community monitoring.
- Parole boards use risk assessments, behavioral records, and program completion to ensure only people who have demonstrated growth are granted release.

Parole is not only compassionate—it is evidence-based public safety.

Parole Saves Maine Money and Strengthens Our Workforce

From a fiscal standpoint, parole is simply smart policy.

Nationally, parole supervision costs one-third of what it costs to incarcerate someone. With Maine's aging population and severe workforce shortages, we need people who have turned their lives around to rejoin the community, work, pay taxes, and fill essential roles.

Every person who successfully reenters society strengthens our economy and reduces the long-term burden on social services.

Parole Is Accountability, Not Leniency

I want to be very clear:

This is not about "letting people out early."

This is about earning an opportunity.

Parole requires:

- Years of positive behavior
- Program and treatment completion
- Educational advancement
- Demonstrated remorse and responsibility
- A solid reentry plan
- And continued supervision and monitoring

If anything, parole increases accountability. It allows the state to say:

"You've shown us change—now show the community."

Why This Matters to Me Personally

For me, this issue is personal.

I have seen people who have spent years transforming their lives—working through trauma, building skills, helping others inside—yet still have no chance to prove that change to anyone outside the walls. I have seen the pain in families who know their loved one is no longer the same person who committed their crime, but who have no avenue for supervised, gradual reentry.

Without parole, hope becomes harder to hold onto.

And without hope, rehabilitation becomes harder to sustain.

We say we believe in second chances in Maine. We say we believe in redemption.

But right now, we have no system that reflects those values.

Parole Makes Communities Safer and More Humane

If we want safer communities—not just today but long term—we must invest in policies that support real rehabilitation and structured reentry.

Parole provides:

- Accountability
- Supervision
- Treatment continuity
- Victim input
- Risk-based release decisions
- A safer transition home

The states that have done this successfully give us a roadmap. Maine does not have to guess—we simply need to follow what has been proven to work.

Closing

In closing, I urge you to support the establishment of parole in Maine. It is a policy rooted in data, in fiscal responsibility, in community safety, and in basic human dignity.

People can change.

Families can heal.

Communities can thrive.

But only if we build a system that allows for all of that to happen.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to a safer and more compassionate Maine. I would be honored to answer any questions the committee may have.