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*Testimony of Representative Sophie Warren in Support of*  
**L.D. 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to**  
**Examine Reestablishing Parole**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and respected colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I'm Sophie Warren, fortunate to represent Scarborough House District 124, here today as co-sponsor and in support of L.D. 1941.

This bill does not represent a radical rewrite of Maine's correctional system. It is a measured and incremental improvement that builds on what already exists while addressing gaps the Legislature's own Commission identified.

Rather than turning the system upside-down, L.D. 1941 adds structure, transparency, and fairness to release decision-making for a small group of people serving long sentences, while preserving public-safety discretion at every stage.

This bill is not a radical departure. It modernizes what Maine already does. Maine already has mechanisms that allow structured release before the absolute end of a sentence:

- supervised community confinement;
- work-release and programming-based release;
- re-entry and transition placements; and
- discretionary decision-making by Department of Corrections officials.

What we do **not** have today is:

- a consistent standards-based review process;
- clear behavioral incentives inside facilities;
- formal recognition of rehabilitation and risk-reduction; or
- a transparent avenue for case-by-case evaluation.

These are core, evidence-based tenants of this bill. LD 1941 does not create automatic release and it does not shorten sentences by default. Instead, it creates a formal review process, rather than what exists now which can be characterized as ad-hoc administrative discretion. In doing so, it ties decisions to validated risk and rehabilitation criteria, places continued supervision on release, rather than unconditional reentry, while ensuring victim participation and safety conditions remain central.

Re-establishing structured parole would not place Maine on the cutting edge of reforms. It would place us in alignment with our neighbors. Across the region, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and New Hampshire all operate parole or discretionary release systems without using the term parole. Rather than being unusual through this reform, Maine is currently the outlier in the Northeast.

This bill does not suggest radical departure from the status quo. What it does is implement the work that evidence shows us reduces crime, strains on public resources, recidivism, while integrating a clear, publicly facing, transparent system developed through a Commission which integrated public and private voices, advocates, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons, victims and survivors, legislators and Department officials.

In other words, the bill organizes discretion, rather than expanding it. This is a policy refinement, not a revolution.

For people serving long sentences, the current system offers few meaningful incentives tied to rehabilitation or demonstrated personal growth. This bill makes specific and practical changes:

1. A clear eligibility & review pathway. Instead of uncertainty or informal review, eligible individuals will receive:
  - a scheduled opportunity to be heard
  - a consistent set of standards
  - decisions tied to documented behavior and progress

This creates predictability and accountability, both for the individual and for the state.

Today, a person can complete treatment, pursue education, maintain a clean disciplinary record...and still have no structured process for demonstrating readiness for supervised release.

2. Under this bill, those efforts would matter in a concrete way by recognizing work, programs, and risk-reduction. The bill directs the Board to consider:
  - participation in treatment & behavioral programming;
  - educational and vocational achievement;
  - reentry planning and community support; and
  - risk assessment results.

In its very design, you can see where this bill will not guarantee release. Rather, it ensures rehabilitative work which has demonstrably positive impacts is measurably relevant, which strengthens institutional safety and outcomes of these investments made by the state and by impacted persons alike.

3. Release under this bill is conditional, supervised, and revocable upon violations. That means risk can be managed in the community, support services can be coordinated, and violations have enforceable consequences. I cannot emphasize this enough when I say every reputable study you can find see this dynamic as safer than waiting until sentence expiration, when supervision may not be available at all and no work is required for said release.

Rep. Milliken's bill does three valuable and reasonable things:

1. Makes review structured rather than ad-hoc;
2. Connects rehabilitation to meaningful incentives; and
3. Ensures supervised release remains controlled and public-safety-focused.

It keeps discretion and accountability, while strengthening transparency. And it moves Maine from being a regional outlier toward a balanced, evidence-guided system consistent with other Northeastern states.

For those reasons, I urge you to support L.D. 1941. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.