

To the Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole,

My name is Alexandra Adler. I am a resident of Worcester, MA, but I have spent at least 1 week every summer in Maine for the past 10 years, and feel a close connection to your state. **I am writing to you today to show my absolute support in re-establishing parole in Maine.** Not only is this an important first step in abolishing mass incarceration, thereby reducing prison costs, but it also supports the belief that people are capable of change and worthy of redemption. In the words of Van Goethe, "If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as they ought to be, we help them to become what they are capable of becoming."

Everyone deserves a second chance, especially those whose life circumstances left them damaged to begin. Our carceral system is broken, and this is a great first step towards fixing it.

Thank you for considering my opinion, and know that I value the work that you do.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Adler
Worcester, MA

To the Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole,

It is with great interest that I write to you today regarding the reinstatement of parole in the state of Maine. It may seem strange that a resident of Indiana would write a letter of support for the reinstatement of parole in a state nearly 1,000 miles away, and you might be right. Admittedly, the complexity of the corrections system was far from my consciousness until recently. Growing up in a small sleepy Midwestern town in Ohio I was not personally connected with anyone who had actually spent time in jail let alone in prison. My experience of the corrections system was limited to melodramatic characterizations of violent offenders in the media commonly portrayed in the 1980s and 1990s. My resultant attitude was conveyed in the all too pervasive sigh of relief when someone “got what they deserved” and “locked up.” The predisposing narrative was that violent offenders should be locked away in order to protect society, *for as long as it takes*. It was something that I was happy to allow the state to control and keep the justice system and its processes as far away from me as possible.

It was these early life assumptions that became the ground on which I structured my opinions about the criminal justice system. They became an automatic response that percolated beneath the surface. I lived with these assumptions during my adolescence and early adulthood years. Now in my early 40s I began to experience something new, something curious, something that ruptured the paradigmatic understanding I had of the justice system. A new narrative through relationships that I have developed with several incarcerated individuals has prompted this resurrected curiosity. It's these relationships that have changed my views and brought them back into conscious awareness. One of these individuals is a resident in the Maine prison system. That's why it may not be strange that I come to you today in this fashion.

Through these relationships I've experienced a growing awareness and desire to see the justice system evolve. Change for the sake of change is not what has inspired me to write to you today. I write for many reasons, but perhaps the most pertinent reason is because of the relationships that have caused me to ask questions about the criminal justice system and the long term impacts of incarceration. These reflective moments led me to wonder what being a victim of a violent crime might be like, but also what it might be like if I were an incarcerated person. Imagining my life in these ways has led me to consider these varied sides of the criminal justice system. I've wrestled with questions about my personal safety and the safety of my community and am now keenly interested in how a society can take steps to actually reduce violence in their communities in ways that are humane.

What we are faced with is a dilemma that requires many (seemingly) small changes. There is no “one size fits all” approach that will magically fix the problems of the justice system. This nuanced approach may be difficult but it is a reflective task that is important for understanding the problems we face as we look for answers about public safety and the humane treatment of incarcerated persons. Parole for the rehabilitated may serve as an important missing link between recidivism and repeat violence in the communities in which we live.

In my work with individuals who have been incarcerated, often due to addiction and substance abuse, I do see stories of success through engagement with the criminal justice system, but it does require the work and reflection of the individual. Without this “buy in” we often do see repeat offense. But in the setting of the deep work of engagement of the individual we often see a burgeoning desire to remain

sober and in some cases enter a space of sponsorship of those who continue to struggle with the recidivism of their addiction. There is a certain wisdom that comes only from experience of living through addiction and coming out on the other side. While it may be argued that the world of addiction and the world of perpetrated violence are different and require a tailored approach, I argue that there is a wisdom that society benefits from when someone is rehabilitated in any fashion.

It would be heartless to *merely consider* in passing the concerns of those who have suffered violent crimes. But to view the option of parole as always being inconsiderate to victims of violent crimes may go too far. Discussions of rehabilitation and parole do not have to be void of sensitivity to victims nor negate the experience of violent crime. I understand this as a key point of contention in this debate. Knowing that traumatizing experiences do not go away when “someone pays for what they did” should give us pause when we hear that someone serving a 50 year sentence has no chance of parole. Healing of trauma is slow and unless we understand that healing and punishment are not synonymous we miss a key point of the civil healing process.

Perhaps we might imagine the reintroduction of parole as an opportunity for healing by incentivizing rehabilitation. What if reintroducing parole provided an opportunity for the incarcerated individual to take an active role in their rehabilitation. Creating this process may provide a measurable tool to decide who is ready to reintegrate into society in a way that is healthy and hopeful. Most of the individuals who are incarcerated as I understand it will ultimately be released in some fashion. How safe is a community when an unrehabilitated individual is released? And where ultimately does that responsibility fall when the perpetrator has in the eyes of the law “paid for their crime?”

This request comes from an outside observer (not an expert in law or criminal justice) who appreciates the complexity of this situation. As an outside observer I eagerly anticipate and hope for discussion and the deep work that this issue deserves. I look forward to seeing and participating in this unfolding and living story. Thank you for considering the reinstatement of parole as one of many ways to support our communities health, healing and well being.

Sincerely,

Andrew Barchus

10/17/2022

Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission,

I really appreciate you taking the time to look at re-establishing parole in Maine. I have become aware and invested in the re-establishment of parole since I befriended an individual who is incarcerated in the Maine prison system. It seems quite disturbing and sad to me that this issue would not have been important to me if I had not had this friendship. By having this personal relationship, I wholeheartedly understand why parole is a necessary form of hope and mercy in our current prison system. I wonder how many other citizens, especially those on the commission and lawmakers, are as ill-informed as I was. I want to urge the commission members to set aside any fear-based reactions and instead guide their decisions with empathy and awareness towards big picture problem solving for those incarcerated and those they have harmed.

My incarcerated friend committed his crime over 14 years ago, when he was 18 years old. Since then, he has drastically changed his worldview, and moves through life in a demeanor upholding ethical standards beyond most free-to-roam citizens. My friend has proven that when restorative practices are in place, there can be healing within the self and the communities one resides in. He now carries a wisdom that emanates good will, resiliency and understanding. If we can put a system into place that supports and motivates change, the benefits of this would not only help incarcerated individuals, but also the victims, communities, and societies they live in.

I am a therapist and work with people coming from a multitude of backgrounds, traumatic experiences and complex personalities. We now know that not only behaviors can change but actual personality is fluid. Personality changes happen in many circumstances, for many reasons. It seems clear that a parole process that aligns with restorative justice practices could be the supportive practice needed for change. Could restorative justice practices between offender and victim/survivor be a required protocol, if the victim/survivor so chooses, before parole? It seems this type of action could have unprecedented ripple effects if adopted.

My friend is in the category of the 22% of incarcerated individuals serving sentences longer than 10 years. It makes a lot of sense to me that part of the focus of the commission is to figure out more ethical options for this group of people. While listening in on the commission meetings, I sometimes hear fear-based reactions to seemingly simple ideas. It seems the only arguments I've heard against parole are based in fear. Yes, there are a lot of details to work out, there is no doubt about that. I have admired the commission's

ability to address the details and nuances of such a complex issue. I ask of you: please do not let fear invade common sense decisions. Please set fear aside and observe truth.

Part of the healing process for a victim/survivor is to observe the offender taking ownership of their actions and healing, not staying locked away. From a compassionate lens, if somebody has gone through the rehabilitation process and is no longer a threat, should they not be able to re-enter society? We need to create policies that support healing and restoration for all parties affected by harm. Parole can be one of those policies that you have the power to recommend to lawmakers.

I really appreciate your efforts in bringing about a more equitable, ethical, and meaningful system. Thank you!

With much sincerity,

April Hayes, M.A.

Co-founder of Love University

Loveuvt.org

april.hayes@icloud.com

From: Prawer, Samuel
Sent: Thursday, October 13, 2022 8:17 AM
To: Arthur Jones; Bickford, Bruce; Black, Anna; Bruce Bickford - Personal; Cyrway, Scott; Evangelos, Jeffrey; Gay, Jared; Hickman, Craig; James Mason; Joseph Jackson; Liberty, Randall; MacDonald, Julia; Natasha Irving; Parrish, Whitney; Rodriguez, Victoria; Scott Cyrway - New personal; Scott Cyrway - personal; Stokes, William; Warren, Charlotte; Yustak, Laura
Subject: FW: [Reinstatement.of.Parole-ip] Meeting Reminder - Parole Commission 10/14

Please see below, testimony we received over email.

-Sam

From: Calista Cross <calista@myfairpoint.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2022 9:18 AM
To: Prawer, Samuel <Samuel.Prawer@legislature.maine.gov>
Subject: RE: [Reinstatement.of.Parole-ip] Meeting Reminder - Parole Commission 10/14

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.
+Good morning SAM,

I will be zooming in on this next meeting again.

I hope the prisoners will be able to talk n say something abojut how they feel about parole & why..if they can't have a meeting at MSP why not have it so they can zoom in to this n let them have something to say..this is all about them.

May I tell my story for maybe TRACY MEGGISON won't get to tell his story. He in first place was coerced into a tape confession from police at that time. He was 18 never been in trouble before but was with someone who killed someone..bad timing for sure,,he was convicted of being a murderer which he was not..we as family over the years tried to prove his innocent n I still have been helping TRACY N only one as both parents have died since he has been gone,,33 yrs right now,,for something he did not do..people feel they are the victims but trust me SAM we who have someone in prison are victims to,,we suffer like the rest do,,we might not have lost someone in murder but we lost them in prison almost as bad..so we all hurt but we can forgive if we have the heart to.

Tracy now 53 has done so good in prison n has been in dog training program,,hospice, fund raising,,is in the ELU as he has done so well..now taking college classes to improve himself for the future,,a well liked prisoners by warden n commisioner who have know him a long time n know how well he has done..he got 70 yrs,,n some get hardly any time for murder..a friend of his in prison shot a guy n his wife n killed one but got 15 yrs..out of prison now ..it was costly like 100,000. His family helped him but our family donot have funds like this ..anyone at MSP can tell you what a nice person TRACY is n hard working..always was a kid..he has 9 more yrs n he himself said he has done all he can do to make him self better so why waste nine more yrs when he can be outside of prison n provide for himself? This is so pathetic as he deserves a second chance as I know others do to,,why keep them locked up if they can go outside n earn their keep? It cost tax payers so much to provide for each prisoner..release them n give them a chance to take care of themselves,,let them show they can do this ..this is why we need to get parole back..donot hold up parole for those who donot qualify for this but take into account of those who are being held back for bettering themselves..if it does not work out then send them back to prison..they know if they don't follow rules where they will go,,& after 33 yrs n more or less..I feel they will never do anything to take them back to prison again..this is my opinion of a aunt who has been in this 33 yrs n know it is time for change,,feel free to use my opinion, ,thank you for all the hard work you

have done n the committee..I will be seeing you Friday for sure on zoom.

Thank you Calista Cross TRACY MEGGISIONS AUNT

From: reinstatement.of.parole-ip-request@lists.legislature.maine.gov [mailto:reinstatement.of.parole-ip-request@lists.legislature.maine.gov] On Behalf Of Prawer, Samuel
Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2022 7:31 AM
To: reinstatement.of.parole-ip@lists.legislature.maine.gov
Subject: [Reinstatement.of.Parole-ip] Meeting Reminder - Parole Commission 10/14

Good Morning,

This email is a reminder that the third meeting of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole will be this Friday, October 14, 2022 at 9:00am in Room 437 (VLA Committee Room) at the State House.

This meeting will be held in a hybrid format. Members of the public have the option of attending the meeting in person or viewing a livestream of the meeting through the Legislature's website at this link. This meeting will also include a public comment period. Members of the public who intend to speak remotely during the public comment period should log in to Zoom as an attendee by using the following link: https://legislature-maine-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1GtQBrgYR9ey_S_MspybAw

Materials from the commission's first meeting have been uploaded to the commission's website, accessible at this link.

Samuel W. Prawer
Legislative Analyst
Office of Policy and Legal Analysis
Maine State Legislature
Office Phone: (207) 287-1670

Rethinking Parole in Maine

Considering Economic Contributions of Parolees in the Context of Recent Trends in Maine's Labor Force

Colby Laboratory for Economic Studies

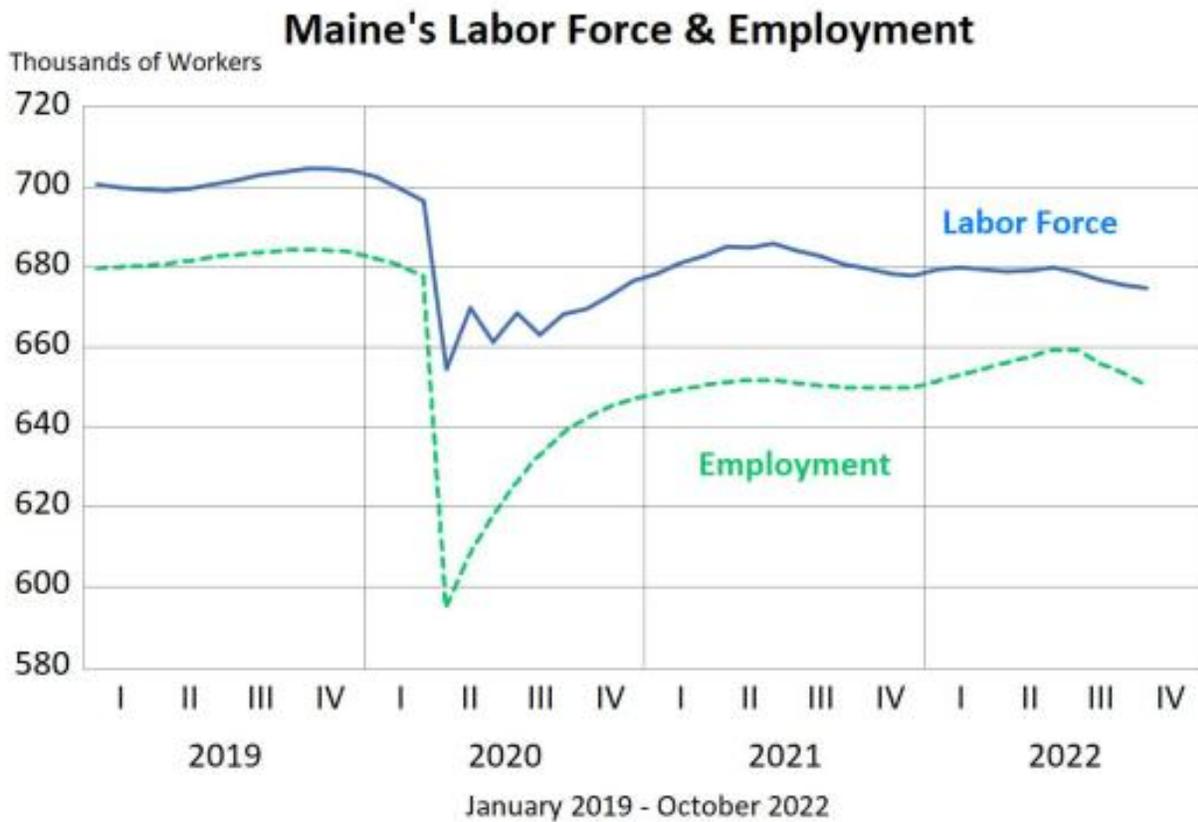
November 27, 2022

Maine's Labor Market is in Crisis

Maine Has A Labor Force Problem



Ask any business owner from Kittery to Calais to Fort Kent about the biggest challenges they face today and virtually every one will say the same thing - they can't find people who want to work. The labor force in Maine (those employed plus unemployed workers looking for a job) has shown virtually no growth over the last decade and a half while the rest of the country enjoyed a 9.5% increase in their pre-Pandemic workforce between 2005 and 2019.



When the COVID-19 Pandemic shut down Maine's economy in 2020, employment fell in April by more than 12%. Maine's workforce has yet to recover to its pre-Pandemic levels and in fact has been trending downward since the middle of 2021. Employment in Maine has decreased each month during the second half of 2022. Rising interest rates, a decrease in consumer confidence, and forecasts of a national recession leave business owners with little reason for optimism for 2023 and beyond.

The engines of economic growth depend on a productive work force and the current state of Maine's labor market is anything but "The Way Life Should Be." Solutions to the labor market challenges facing the state will have to come from a variety of creative efforts on the part of policy makers, entrepreneurs, and corporations both within and beyond Maine's borders. In the analysis that follows we offer a framework for considering opportunities for expanding Maine's workforce by including human resources overlooked by outdated institutional practices, a lack of empirical evidence, and political mistrust.

Rethinking Parole

In 1976 Maine became the first U.S. state to abolish parole and is presently one of 16 states without a formal system for rehabilitating women and men for re-entry into society before serving their full prison sentence. During the past 4 1/2 decades several states have decided that the dramatic rise in their prison populations hasn't been worth the cost. Louisiana, Virginia, Pennsylvania, California, New York and Illinois have recently taken steps to reduce their prison populations by reinstating or expanding their systems of parole or are studying alternatives for supervised release. At the federal level President Trump signed legislation in 2018 reducing sentences for some inmates. Earlier this year Maine's legislature joined this movement by creating a commission to investigate restoring parole with a December 2022 deadline for releasing a report of its findings.

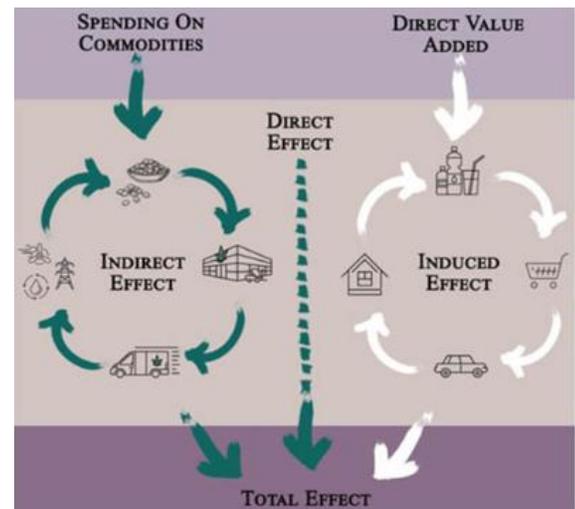
Studies of correctional systems in other states - including county jails, state prisons and penitentiaries - have demonstrated that it costs more to house, feed and educate those convicted of crimes in prison than to support them in some form of supervised release and transition to working members of the communities

from which they came.. Other studies conclude that relative to fixed-sentencing approaches, parole can improve resource allocation by prioritizing costly prison space to highest-risk inmates and creating incentives for prisoners to reduce their risk of recidivism in order to gain early release by investing in their own rehabilitation.

A lack of publicly-available information on how much Maine spends on incarcerating its prisoners makes a careful study of the costs and benefits of reinstating some form of parole in the state difficult. The exercise that follows provides a framework for thinking about the potential benefits of reinstating some form of parole in Maine by examining the economic impacts of an increase in the state's workforce in targeted jobs parolees might hold on their release from prison without much additional training beyond what they might receive during their time in confinement.

Economic Impact Analysis

To model contributions to Maine's economy attributable to parolees, we constructed a simulation using the Impact Analysis for Planning (IMPLAN) computer software. Economic impact analysis operates under the simple principle that households and businesses spend what they earn – outputs come from inputs, thereby connecting industries with individuals and the government.



Direct effects in our analysis represent "first round" increases in economic activity due to an event. In this exercise the event is an increase in the number of available workers.

Indirect effects capture successive rounds of economic activity that result when businesses that hire new workers pay other businesses for commodities or services to support an increased level of activity. Indirect effects capture the fact that the operating expenses of businesses have multiplicative impacts on the economy.

Induced effects represent an additional economic multiplier process through successive rounds of activity that occur when employees spend their earnings on things like rent, utilities, appliances, food, and clothing - each dollar of spending arriving as income elsewhere in the economy that then results in more spending.

Results

To model contributions of parolees to Maine's economy we simulated several industry employment events making different assumptions about the industries that parolees would be entering into. We determined that the most useful model for illustrating the multiplier processes at work in Maine was an assumption of 100 new workers employed in equal fraction in the lobstering, construction, auto repair, barbering, and restaurant industries. The results of this model simulation are shown in the table below.

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
1 - Direct	100.00	\$4,586,703.89	\$4,834,219.29	\$7,841,296.16
2 - Indirect	11.66	\$622,477.32	\$1,054,578.99	\$2,205,554.44
3 - Induced	31.04	\$1,480,389.80	\$2,646,315.52	\$4,630,190.11
Totals	142.71	\$6,689,571.00	\$8,535,113.80	\$14,677,040.71

According to our results, **an increase in Maine's workforce of 100 employees spread equally across these five industries would result in approximately \$14.7 million in increased economic activity.** Roughly 43 other jobs would

be supported by this output through indirect and induced effects on Maine's economy.

This analysis is designed to provide an educational outreach resource to help discussions among policy makers thinking about the economic and social impacts of reinstating parole in Maine in the context of a critical need for additional workers in the state.

The results above are roughly scalable, say, by dividing the total effects presented in the table above in half for just 50 parolees. However, there are some noteworthy limitations to this type of analysis beyond the assumptions made about types of jobs parolees might hold upon release from prison. Although possible in a more comprehensive modeling effort, no attempt is made in this exercise to account for differences resulting from the counties, cities, or towns in Maine in which parolees are employed. This illustration also does not account for dynamic changes that would likely occur over time as businesses and support services adjust to increases in their workforce.

Nonetheless, the state's current labor force crisis provides a context for thinking creatively about resources that may be hidden in plain site to improve Maine's economy.

Colby Laboratory for Economics Studies

This analysis was prepared by Owen Boyd '23 and Michael Donihue, director of the [Colby Laboratory for Economic Studies](#). The Colby Laboratory for Economic Studies is a collaborative research workshop engaging students and professors with stakeholders and policy makers to provide objective analysis, information, and educational outreach on current issues and events.

FW: Reinstatement of Parole in Maine - Please pass on



Praver, Samuel

Thu 9/8, 9:05 AM

Arthur Jones <foxtrot1@roadrunner.com>; Bickford, Bruce; Black, Anna; +15 more ✓

Reply all | ✓

Parole study

From: Deborah Meehan <deborah.meehan@maine.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 8:49 PM
To: Praver, Samuel <Samuel.Praver@legislature.maine.gov>; MacDonald, Julia <Julia.MacDonald@legislature.maine.gov>
Subject: Reinstatement of Parole in Maine - Please pass on

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Dear Ms MacDonald and Mr Praver:

Thank you for passing on my support for the Reinstatement of Parole in Maine to the members of the Commission appointed to examine the issue.

I feel strongly about the importance of parole and urge you to support its reinstatement as an alternative to incarceration and as a strategy to reduce prison costs, incentivize DOC residents to use incarceration time productively and, on a larger scale, reduce crime.

For fifteen years (2006-2021) I was responsible for creating, administering and sustaining the college program at Maine's Department of Corrections adult facilities on behalf of the University of Maine at Augusta. I experienced on a very direct level the power of educational opportunities to transform behavior and the trajectory of lives. DOC residents were motivated, smart and committed to success. Since the University program began in 2006 UMA has awarded hundreds of degrees at the associate and baccalaureate levels and, within that grouping of students, the recidivism rate is less than 5%. This is extraordinary! If we are able to incentivize college recruits with the hope of parole we will greatly increase enrollment.

All of us need to live lives that are focused on positive goals and future plans. These are basic tenets of good mental health and productive living. Rewarding the good behavior of DOC residents with reduced sentences or parole, will decrease incarceration costs for society without increasing crime. Society saves money when well-behaved prisoners are rewarded with early release.

In addition to positively changing the behavior of DOC residents while they are incarcerated, parole can also contribute to public safety by helping offenders reintegrate into society through a gradual, controlled, and supported release. There are numerous psychological challenges when released from prison, including discrimination, isolation, and instability. This can lead to devastating outcomes and a cycle of repeated offenses. By supporting prisoners as they reenter the community under supervision, parole is a strategy for increasing community safety.



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initiating and supporting correctional programming that is creative, cost effective and rehabilitative. Maine's next innovative step is to reintroduce parole to reward residents, provide incentives, and support a healthy and holistic process for them to return to society.

Thank you for your good work on this issue.

Deborah Meehan

Dear Esteemed Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole

I am a 45 year old woman of colour who resides in Cape Town, South Africa. I have come to hear about the commission and the process of examination and have been following proceedings closely.

I would like to add my voice in support of the reestablishing of parole in Maine and, hopefully, nationwide in the United States. As a child, I grew up under the oppressive Apartheid regime in South Africa and, as young adult I was fortunate enough to witness the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years of heinous and unjust incarceration. We danced in the streets! I bore witness to systematic dismantling of this regime through conversations and dialogues much like your commission is conducting. I, my family, my fellow South African's rejoiced in 1994 when the first democratic elections were held in my country. And in the years that followed, through President Nelson Mandela's example, we watched the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation commission. I saw Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu breakdown in floods of tears during one of the proceedings. It is an image I will never forget and a collective feeling of intolerable pain, grief and rage that imprinted itself on my psyche.

What I learnt is that, arduously difficult though it may be, was the importance of the act of forgiveness, bot of oneself and of others. It was a concept that I was not familiar with. It was far easier to rage, to blame, to be fuelled by hatred. But the humility, the compassion and the courage it took to forgive, to allow vicious perpetrators and sworn enemies that I had been taught to despise, is a lesson that I still carry with me today and, though I do not always get it right, practice my life. It is also a legacy that I have passed onto my daughters, aged 15 and six; a small but significant attempt on my part to break the cycle of punitive judgment and seething resentment.

I applaud the commission for the work that they are doing and wish to have my simple truth heard: change is possible through offering another unshakable hope.

I have seen this in my personal and professional lives. As a former drug-addicted sex worker who committed crimes in order to support my lethal habit, I recently celebrated 18 years of sobriety and am in a position to help others through my therapeutic practice, through my public speaking, through the principles by which I live my life. A life of love, of service and of eternal hope.

Please see this email as unwavering support for the reestablishing of parole in Maine.

Thank you for your time and may your efforts be blessed.

Yours sincerely,

Desiree-Anne Martin

Dear Julia MacDonald and Samuel Prawer,

I am extremely proud that Maine has undertaken the formation of a committee to examine the reestablishment of parole. Thank you for the work you are doing. Our fine state has the opportunity to draft a deeply researched and circumspect proposal for a well-resourced parole structure that can serve as a model for other governments. Let us make progress towards the implementation of a criminal justice system that emphasizes cooperative rehabilitation.

Thank you,

Diana Tuite

Waterville, ME

Please forward this statement to the Commission members. Thank you.

We submit this statement in support of re-establishing parole in Maine.

Parole allows those who have been incarcerated for breaking the law to earn back the right to return home, reintegrate into society, and contribute to their families. It makes communities safer than when people are simply released after serving a long sentence. Nationwide the recidivism rate for those on parole is far lower than for those released after completing their full sentence.

Current Alternatives to Parole:

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- Maine prisons offer 'good time'
- credits that reduce sentences. But these are based on sentence length rather than rehabilitative efforts and are limited for longer sentences. Parole offers much greater incentives than 'good time' credit for personal growth and rehabilitation.
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- The only way to shorten a sentence
- in Maine is through a commutation by the Governor. This has never been utilized to reward rehabilitation.
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- Probation is included as part
- of the sentence and is not an incentivized pathway toward rehabilitation.
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- The Supervised Community Confinement
- Program (SCCP) allows prisoners to apply to serve the final 30 months of their incarceration in a community setting, offering disproportionate reentry support for those with longer sentences. For example, SCCP reduces a 6 year sentence by 42%, but only reduces
- a 60 year sentence by 4.2%.
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As concluded in [a recent Washington Post article](#): “The data is in. It shows that we can thoughtfully release low-risk people from prison with supervision and not cause a new crime wave. At a time when crime is going up in so many cities and towns, we cannot afford to waste money or resources keeping those who no longer need to be in prison locked up.”

**Respectfully submitted,
Ed Modell and Ms. Merle Rockwell
South Thomaston, Maine**

As a professor at UMA for 20 years, and an educator at MSP for over ten years, I strongly believe that education changes lives. The men I've had the pleasure of knowing in my classes are not the same men they were when they began their sentences, often ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. They are thoughtful, reflective, empathic, sensitive human beings. They are brothers and fathers, hospice workers, organic farmers, bee keepers, dog trainers, poets and scholars. Their compassion as humans surpasses many others I know on "the outside."

As an educator, and also the survivor of a violent crime, I believe in redemption, in the possibilities along the trajectory of a human life. I hope the commission will consider the possibility of redemption in their decision to return the option of parole to the state of Maine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ellen M. Taylor

Dr. Ellen M. Taylor, she/her

Professor of English

Coordinator of Humanities

Believer in Humanity and Redemption

University of Maine at Augusta

"A lighthouse keeper's ethics:

You tend for all or none"

Adrienne Rich

Parole Study Commission

Testimonial

To: Parole Study Commission, State Representatives and Senators

My name is Foster Bates, I have been incarcerated for 21 years on a life sentence. Since the day of my arrest (August 7th, 2001), I have unequivocally professed and maintained my innocence. I have been shouting from the mountain tops that I did not hurt anyone.

Fifteen years into my life sentence, three witnesses came forward with newly discovered (exculpatory) evidence that shows and proves that I DID NOT commit the murder and rape of my friend Tammy Dickson. One of the three witnesses testified at my June 13, 2016, DNA Post-conviction Review hearing. She provided an overwhelming and powerful testimony, when she testified for the first time before the court that Tammy Dickson was alive after I left her apartment, **“When he went down the stairs I went right up and knocked on the door, and she didn’t answer right off. I knocked again, and then she answered the door. She answered the door in what I thought was kind of inappropriate; it was lingerie. Her hair was a mess, she had like a rode that was like sexy attire, smelled like sex. And I asked to use her phone and she wasn’t disheveled or nothing; she was fine...”** *(June 13, 2016 DNA PCR Hearing Transcript)*

For the last twenty-one years of my life at Maine State Prison, I have laid my head down on a pillow and closed my eyes at night with insufferable emotions; anguish, despair, and hopelessness. Knowing that witnesses; three complete strangers have come forward with newly discovered (exculpatory) evidence that proves that I did not commit this crime, makes each day at Maine State Prison all the more unbearable and agonizing for me. Psychological torture! My soul feels like it’s in the chambers of torment and never-ending sorrow. Parole cannot give back the twenty-one years I have lost from being away from my family; however, it most certainly can provide the opportunity for me to rebuild my life with the people I love and help increase public safety with the knowledge I have received about rehabilitation and treatment programs during this incarceration. At the time of Tammy’s death, I was a college student, studying Criminology and Law with the aspirations of becoming a Law School Professor. Since my incarceration, I have graduated from the University of Maine, Augusta with a Bachelor degree. I have been the president of Maine State Prison Branch of NAACP for the past 7-years, and a mentor to the younger residents at Maine State Prison.

Parole provides the gateway to forgiveness, redemption and hope for Maine incarcerated citizens. Parole will present Maine incarcerated citizens with the opportunity to restore their life while continuing to pay their debt to society in a positive manner. Reestablishing Parole in Maine is the best rehabilitative, corrective behavioral and reentry program the state can provide. Ninety-five percent of people who are incarcerated will be released from prison and parole is the best reentry program for anyone being released from a correctional institution. **“Parole does not shorten the length of a sentence. Instead, parole changes the manner in which a sentence is**

served in that the parolee remains under the custody of the institution from which he is released but executes the unexpired portion of his sentence outside of confinement..." with the "threat of return to prison to serve out his sentence there if he violates the conditions of parole." (*Collins v. State* 161 Me at 451 (Me. 1969), and *Mottram v. State*, 232 A.2d 809, 813-14 (Me. 1967). The question we must ask as a society, do you believe in law and order? If you do, then you want everyone being released from prison to succeed. Therefore, reestablishing parole for Maine incarcerated citizens is the right thing to do.

Respectfully submitted,

Foster Bates

Why I Think Parole Would Be Beneficial For Maine

Nadim Haque, Maine State Prison, Warren, ME
04864

In 1976, Maine became the first state to completely abolish parole and introduce a determinate, structured sentencing model. [1] The purpose of this article is to explain why I think parole would be beneficial for Maine.

Parole is an act of grace and mercy; [2] there is “no constitutional or inherent right of a convicted person to be conditionally released before the expiration of a valid sentence.” [3] However, grace and mercy are some of the qualities that differentiate us from non-humans. As humans, we believe in redemption, second acts, and the inherent worth of human potential. Thus, “[c]apacity for change and moral growth is regarded as a core attribute of humanity,” [4] and on the other hand, “taking away an offender’s hope of release is [judged as] cruel and inhumane.” [5] Accordingly, I believe that Maine should give offenders another chance to reintegrate into society because “rehabilitation is always possible,” even for those “serving life sentences.” [6] America must shift its criminal justice model to embrace “mercy,” “justice,” and “some measure of unmerited grace.” [7] Reestablishing parole is one way to inject principles of redemption.

Advocating for criminal justice reforms, then-President Barack Obama explained the significance of justice, mercy, healing, and redemption in the American Justice system as follows:

Those entrusted with the influence of the direction of the criminal justice system must also remember that reform is about more than the dollars we spend and the data we collect. How we treat those that have made mistakes speaks to who we are as a society and is a statement about our values—about our dedication to fairness, equality, and justice and about how to protect our families and communities from harm, heal after loss and trauma, and lift back those among us who have earned a chance of redemption. [8]

Parole has numerous built-in safeguards to protect the victim and the public. It ensures that the parolee is not only under strict supervision during the period of his or her parole, but the parolee may immediately return to prison should the parolee fail to abide by any of the previously agreed upon conditions of release. [9] Parole is a great measuring tool to determine whether a prisoner is ready to integrate into society. It

benefits society because it improves the possibility of inmates successfully reintegrating into society as law-abiding and tax-paying citizens of their communities. Further, parole reunites families and prevents wastes of valuable resources. The savings can be reinvested in our communities.

In closing, Maine’s Republican political consultant, Sam Patten, recently suggested that Maine should use parole as an incentive and not rely solely on punishment methods to motivate offenders to change their criminal ways. [10] I agree with him. Parole will incentivize offenders to take positive, self-corrective steps to rehabilitate. It will therefore reduce recidivism, make long-term contributions to public safety, and save tax dollars.

[1] Evan Popp, *Mills Delays Action on Parole Study Bill, Endangering Criminal Justice Reform Effort*, BEACON (Nov. 2021).

<https://mainebeacon.com/mills-delays-action-on-parole-study-bill-endangering-criminal-justice-reform-effort> (“Maine became the first state to ban parole in 1976 as part of a move toward determinate sentencing.”).

[2] *Escoe v. Zerbst*, 295 U.S. 490, 492 (1935) (noting that parole is considered nothing more than “an act of grace). *See, also*, *Rogers v. Pennsylvania Bd. Of Probation and Parole*, 724 A.2d.319, 322-23(PA 1999) (noting that “parole is a matter of grace and mercy.”).

[3] *Greenholtz v. Inmates of the Nebraska Penal and Corr. Complex*, 422 U.S. 1, 7 (1979).

[4] Michael O’Hear, *The Beginning of the End of Life Without Parole?* 23 FED.SENT’G. REP 1, 7 (2010)

[5] Joshua Kleinfeld, *Two Cultures of Punishment*, 68 STAN. L. REV. 933, 954 (2016).

[6] *Id.*

[7] BRYANT STEVENSON, *JUST MERCY: A STORY OF JUSTICE AND REDEMPTION* 18 (2015, paperback ed.).

[8] Barack Obama, *The President’s Role in Advancing Criminal Justice Reform*, 130 HARV. L. REV. 811, 865-66 (2017).

[9] Joan Petersilia, *Parole and Prisoner Reentry in the United States*, 26 CRIME & JUST. 497, 502-504 (1999).

[10] Sam Patten, *Parole*, *Courier-Gazette* (Feb. 17, 2022).

<https://knox.villagesoup.com/2022/02/17/PAROLE/> (“[w]ith no carrot and only a stick, a correction system becomes strictly about punishment and not rehabilitation.”).

Testimony to The Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole 10-14-22

I am a psychiatrist and have been treating people with severe and persistent psychiatric illness for 44 years. Concurrently I practiced addiction medicine in urban locations, directing the addiction rehabilitation services at Boston City Hospital in Massachusetts and Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York. I have served as a consultant at Rahway State Prison in New Jersey, Bridgewater and Walpole correctional facilities in Massachusetts and Riker's Island Correctional Facility and the Kirby State Forensic Facility in New York. For several years I was the Medical Director of the Maine Office of Substance Abuse while serving as the psychiatrist for the Main State Forensic Outpatient Service. I worked as a Regional medical director for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and on three occasions served as interim Medical Director for the Augusta Mental Health Institute. For the past eight years I have been the Lead psychiatrist, supervising psychiatric services, for the Main Department of Corrections and have been the psychiatrist and senior clinician at the Intensive Mental Health Unit at Maine State Prison, treating those residents from correctional facilities throughout the state of Maine, who because of severe mental illness are too dangerous to themselves or others be treated elsewhere in the correctional system. Throughout my career I have worked at the interface of community psychiatric care and the criminal justice system. Based on that experience, I respectfully present the following observations and suggestions.

The fact that in the United States, our prisons house more people with serious mental illness than do our psychiatric treatment facilities, is well-known. That we are, on a national level, overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate treatment for those individuals is also well known. Severe and persistent mental illness makes it impossible for people to function independently and adequately in the community. Because of the lack of available treatment and safe shelter, people with severe illness are frequently incarcerated. At times they be act irrationally, at times breaking laws, creating disturbances, hurting themselves and less frequently hurting others. Once incarcerated, people with persistent mental illness fare even worse than on the outside. Their illnesses worsen, they are often victimized' and remain incarcerated for longer periods of time.

What distinguishes the population of individuals with severe psychiatric illness from the other residents in prison, is the fact that for the most part they don't demonstrate criminal thinking or planned criminal behaviors. They are incarcerated because of their untreated illnesses. If adequately treated people recover from their illnesses, and if they remain stable have lower rates of recidivism. Individuals who become incarcerated because of conscious behaviors that ignore laws, conventions and the rights of other people, do not change these behaviors as a result of psychiatric treatment. In order to return to and remain safely in the community, they require intensive programming to help extinguish criminal thinking, establish new social values and modify the behavior. The process is challenging and difficult and despite attempts to provide such rehabilitation, recidivism rates are disappointingly high. Certainly, some people fortunate enough to have access to rehabilitative services, do through effort, motivation modify their thinking and behavior and can successfully return to the community.

For incarcerated people with severe and persistent psychiatric illness, treatment is sparse and

the barriers to recovery are significant. In an environment where people are easily victimized, misunderstood and undertreated, recovery is arduous. There are, however, remarkable people who, if afforded treatment, succeed in regaining their ability to see the world clearly and recover the capacity to direct their behavior. Most importantly however, individuals in recovery from severe psychiatric illness are unlikely to demonstrate criminal thinking, values and behaviors seen in "general" prison population. They tend to be unsuccessful in criminal endeavors. They do not require the kind of retraining, extinguishing of antisocial thinking and practicing prosocial behaviors as do those people who are incarcerated because of consciously planning crimes and impulsively manifest antisocial behaviors. Persons with the luck and fortitude to recover from major psychiatric illness while incarcerated, do not benefit from remaining incarcerated regardless of the presence of rehabilitative programming; in fact, they are damaged by further incarceration. Recovery from psychiatric illness is difficult in any setting. Those individuals who succeed in recovery while incarcerated value and guard that recovery and are highly motivated towards therapy, support groups and the use of medication.

In considering parole for individuals who have demonstrated the capacity to overcome the fear, constraints and misery of severe and persistent mental illness, the community would best be protected and those individuals most justly served, by the development of a rigorous, specialized procedure, similar to that utilized in the state forensic system, that evaluates readiness for increased freedom, based on the evaluation of each individual's level of recovery, motivation and predicted safety. The consistently positive outcomes of Maine's Forensic Evaluation and Treatment programs demonstrate the success with which such evidence-based procedures, have, and can continue to protect the community, while providing humane treatment to severely challenged individuals.

Please contact me if further communication would be useful.

James Fine MD
northstar.bf@gmail.com
207-660-5253

Samuel:

Please accept the below statement as my statement in full as I wasn't able to read it in its entirety at the public meeting today.

Joanna Stokinger, Winslow

Thank you Senator Hickman, Representative Warren, and commissioners for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Joanna Stokinger, and I am a former domestic violence victim advocate with the Maine Department of Corrections and most recently a victim advocate with the Maine Attorney General's office in the homicide unit for the last nearly 5 years until June of this year.

I do not represent any of the organizations that I have worked for in the past. I am simply speaking as someone that has spent years advocating for victims of crime. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree in Criminology. I have had a career in criminal justice for 20 years. While living and working in Alaska I worked for Alaska's Public Defender Agency for 8 years. I worked with and advocated for criminal defendants, many charged with sex offenses and murder. I am not blind or unsympathetic to the rights of inmates. Human and civil rights should be afforded to all- including those who are incarcerated, however, I do not believe parole to be a human right.

I am by no means against Restorative Justice, programming, and making our systems work better. I'm here to speak on behalf of victims of crime and surviving family members of victims of homicide. Additionally and unfortunately in March 2021, I became a surviving family member of a homicide victim as well. My family and I are currently in the process of preparing for a murder trial. It is not an easy thing to go through. The fact that my grandson was murdered has taken me out of a career I loved. I had to leave my work as a homicide victim advocate because I couldn't handle the grief and maintain my role in a healthy way. Crime creates a ripple effect in the lives of victims - but does a parole board consider that?

My concerns about reestablishing parole in Maine are numerous. I appreciate that this committee has been formed to examine this issue. When I saw the list of names that make up this committee I was disheartened to see that no one advocating for victims of crime was present. There are however advocates on the committee representing incarcerated individuals and supporting parole. I think both sides need to be represented - I realize that inmates are the first level of individuals that are affected by remaining in prison - that parole is important to their quality of life. But the secondary individuals that are affected by a potential parole bill are the families, friends, and survivors of victims of crime. I'm very active in our local Parents of Murdered Children chapter and parole is a topic of many of our meetings. Victims of crime need certainty that when their case is tried and a sentence is given that they won't have to worry every few years that their offender could get out of prison on parole. The Maine corrections system already has several measures in place such as supervised community control, early release, and good time that inmates are afforded that reduces time off of their sentences and allows for

supervision. They are afforded tablets, education, employment and programming. Speaking of someone who has had many conversations with families of homicide victims both personally and professionally, I have heard time and time again that their loved one never got a second chance at life why should the person that took their life get a second chance at life through parole. Many convicted criminals are dangerous, they should spend the time that they are given behind bars, not being able to ask over and over again to be released on parole.

I know for a fact that families of crime victims are traumatized again and again and again with a parole system. I am that family member. The thought of the person that took my loved one's life having an opportunity over and over again to ask a parole board to release him because he's behaved himself while in prison because he has taken some classes, because he has shown remorse, terrifies me. Victims of domestic violence are continually living in fear knowing that the sentence of their offender will someday run out. It's not fair to victims to add this other level of trauma and uncertainty to their plate.

Maine has not had a parole system for nearly 50 years. After working with victims in Alaska, Florida, and Maine I can honestly say being able to tell victims of crime that there's no parole in Maine gives them a huge feeling of peace and certainty.

If the committee wants to do something to improve the correctional system, focus on supporting the inmates that have already been released - they need housing, jobs, treatment and probation officers with lower caseloads supporting them to be successful. I am a believer in meeting people where they are at and providing programs for people that need it. I don't subscribe to the lock them up and throw away the key mentality. I encourage you to invite and hear from members of our state who are victims of crime and members of crime advocacy organizations. Also victims of crime from states where parole is a part of their process. Please consider victims when making your decision.

Sent from my iPhone

My name is John, and I am a resident at the Maine State Prison. I have been incarcerated for over 15 years and have about 36 years left on my sentence. During that time, I have seen a change in the system and in myself. When I first arrived at the Maine State Prison it was an imposing environment; I found myself adjusting to the norm. For the first three to five years of my sentence, I played a lot of cards, watched T.V., and basically watched the time pass away. However, around 2011 there was a shift in the environment, and rehabilitative programs became more abundant.

I began plugging into positive environments and taking a pro-active approach to myself. I took Art class, Guitar lessons, Music theory classes, I took programming like Core Skills, Start Now, Peer Recovery Support group, the Psychology of Incarceration, Alternatives to Violence Project, the four agreements class, Food Preservation class and more. I began getting into my physical and mental health as well. Not only did I meet regularly with a mental health counselor, and still do, but I took the Hatha Yoga class and the Biology of Exercise class. I also started going to recovery meetings. AA, NA, All recovery, Smart Recovery, Refuge Recovery, and I was a long-standing member of the Recovery Club. In 2017, I took the CCAR Recovery Coach Academy training. I have been doing the rewarding work of coaching my peers one-on-one in their recovery since that time. I have also become a peer facilitator of one the reentry classes that helped me on my path, the Psychology of Incarceration. My path of personal growth has now led towards the next big step which is getting my college education. I've gained a new outlook and a greater sense of responsibility and accountability. This, I feel, is reflected by my continued dedication to purposeful pursuits and can be seen in my maintained 3.9 GPA in the college program.

I have been motivated over the years, but it wasn't always so. It took time to realize that I needed to change, that in order to be happy I needed to have purpose and meaning in my life. And I've found that through all the programs I've experienced, the tools and coping mechanisms learned, the recovery volunteering and coaching, and the teaching and uplifting of my fellow residents in their futures. My mind and heart have truly expanded on this journey.

If I were afforded the opportunity of parole, I would continue on the path I'm currently going down because I know the purpose and meaningfulness in the experiences that I'm involved in. I would continue with my college education, continue recovery coaching, and continue utilizing the tools that have helped me cope over the past 15 years. Maybe down the road I would start a small business. Either way, through my 15-year experience being incarcerated, I know I have a different outlook and appreciation for life. I know I would do my best to make up for the choices I made. If given the chance of parole, I would live as a changed man, in remembrance, respect, and honor of the hurt I once had caused, and I would focus on what's purposeful and meaningful in life.

Greetings Samuel and Julia,

I intend to deliver the attached comments to the Parole Study Commission today but have attached the text below for additional hard copy distribution to Commission members.

Thank you for your help with this,

Jon Courtney

Cape Elizabeth, Maine

Parole4Me Group Priorities

Honorable Commission Members,

Parole4Me is a diverse team of Maine citizens who believe deeply in the human capacity for change. We hold that parole provides an earned path to supported reintegration which will make our communities safer and reduce the costs and impacts of recidivism. Maine should reinstate a parole system operated by a diverse set of professionals focused on reducing harm and increasing public safety through evidence-based practices. After much research and collaborative thought, we have drafted these recommendations for consideration by this Commission:

1. Parole should be presumptive and available to all prisoners. [Maine's parole policy](#) should create a list of expectations including education, personal transformation, growth programs, and other enrichment activities to guide the incarcerated person toward earning parole. If, after completing these expectations, a candidate is denied parole, the parole board should clearly define what conditions the candidate failed to satisfy, should provide a list of specific actions the candidate is expected to fulfill to earn parole, and allow the candidate an opportunity to reapply within one year.
2. The Commission should consult the [Prison Policy Institute](#) and [Rubina Institute](#) reports on existing parole structures for guidelines in crafting Maine parole policy. We recommend adapting [Georgia's balanced model](#) to meet Maine's needs: Georgia generally provides that people are eligible for parole for a misdemeanor after serving the greater of 6 months or $\frac{1}{3}$ of their sentence; for most felonies this changes to 9 months or $\frac{1}{3}$ (whichever is greater). People serving sentences of 21+ years or some people convicted of violent felonies are eligible after 7 years. For people serving Life sentences, we recommend eligibility after 15 years.

3. Qualifications for parole should prioritize behavior and successful personal transformation during the execution of the incarcerated person's sentence, rather than their underlying crime.
4. Maine's parole board should be comprised of a balanced roster of authorities representing a diverse set of disciplines and experiences, to include mental health, law enforcement, Restorative Justice, community-based reentry, family reunification, and previous incarceration. It should also issue yearly, public reports that explain deviations from outcomes recommended by parole guidelines.
5. Every parole candidate should have access to any documents or records the parole board relies on to make its decision about them and be allowed to address inaccuracies found there. Public transparency is necessary in the general decision making process, the decision itself, and the risk assessment tools utilized in the process.

Additionally, we recommend the Commission consult 24 year Rhode Island parole board member and prominent scholar, Dr. Frederick Reamer and review his book [On the Parole Board](#). Commission member Dr. Arthur Jones has served with Dr. Reamer and can speak to his fairness and qualifications.

We also encourage the commission of a financial impact study when a basic framework of parole is reached, similar to [the recent Illinois Sentencing Advisory Policy Council fiscal impact report on parole](#). Details of the study can be provided upon request.

It is our hope and trust that the honorable members of this Commission recognize the extent of thought and effort that has led to these recommendations and that you give them ample consideration as you carry out this crucial work.

Thank you on behalf of Parole4Maine,

Jon Courtney

Cape Elizabeth, Maine

jonscourtney@gmail.com



October 17, 2022

Dear Senator Craig Hickman, Representative Charlotte Warren and members of the Commission to Reexamine Establishing Parole

My name is Kathy Durgin-Leighton, Executive Director of the Restorative Justice Project Maine. I am writing today on behalf of the Restorative Justice Project Maine whose Legislative Committee, made up of staff, members of the board of directors, and community members voted unanimously in support of reestablishing parole in the State of Maine. As its Executive Director, I am proud of Restorative Justice Project Maine's support of a process that opens a pathway to hope and healing.

I am also writing as a resident of Maine. Thirty-seven years ago, my life, and the life of my 22-month-old daughter, were threatened by my neighbor who, having already shot his estranged wife, broke into my home with a shotgun in hand looking for her. Despite the violence that I have experienced in my life, including the domestic violence that I witnessed as a child, I am a firm believer that locking someone up for long periods of time without hope, rehabilitation, or opportunity for healing is not the answer. The person who threatened my life suffered from mental illness and he too experienced violence during his lifetime. Our response to crime by locking someone up, removing them from society, isolating, and punishing offers little for the person who was harmed or for the person who caused the harm.

Parole provides a rehabilitative path toward reintegration into the community. Currently, when a person has served their time and is released, there are no safeguards for the community and no support to the person entering the community. The absence of parole offers no incentive for rehabilitation and perpetuates further harm.

If combined with restorative practices, parole offers opportunity for transformative change for the person who caused the harm, and real healing for the person who was harmed. These practices are intended to promote healing and, as such, the future safety and well-being of all affected individuals.

I urge you to support the reestablishment of Parole for the benefit of all citizens in the State of Maine.
Thank you for your consideration.

Kathy Durgin-Leighton
Executive Director
Restorative Justice Project Maine
kathy@rjpmidcoast.org

My name is Katrina Bridges when I was 19 in late August 2000, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy 4 months later in early January 2001 I was arrested for murder just days before my 20th birthday, for the death of my boyfriend. In January 2002 days before 21st birthday I was sentenced to 47 years in prison. Which meant I would watch my son grow up while I was incarcerated, and I would basically grow up incarcerated.

Since being here I have tried to do anything I can to make my time useful there have been bumps in the road along the way but I have managed to rise above them keep my head above the water. I facilitated A program called Alternatives to Violence for 15 years and it changed my life, gave me a relationship with the outside facilitators that I adored and looked forward to each and every weekend I shared with them. I took "Impact of Crime on Victims" and listened to some of the women's victims that have been incarcerated here in the past speak about how they carried anger for a while but saw the other side of the table to and saw that our families were also victims. That class made a huge impact on my life and proved to my that NO crime is victimless!

I have been involved in numerous programs learning to train dogs for people with disabilities. The first program I was in was called N.E.A.D.S. it was the start of a new way of life for me. After that I was able to be involved in training a few dogs for My Wonderful Dog for Elsa Larsen she showed me what it was like to give independence to someone that other wise wouldn't have it. Then we had the chance to socialize puppies from kill shelters down south that were very sick, scared, and some very needy. I was also involved in the pilot program to train K-9 working dogs.

This all led me to my next journey, I found a place that I could take a course and I began school. In 2015 I received my Veterinary Assistant Certificate, I was so happy and proud of myself, I made payments every month in a few years I paid the bill and completed it on my own. It was the first thing in my life I had accomplished on my own, I was hungry for more, and I was able to finally find a course that spoke to me. In 2021 I received my Canine Specialist Certificate, and in September I Graduated from my Master Grooming Program.

I have been incarcerated for 20 plus years and I'm currently in an Entrepreneurship Pathways Course through Washington County Comunity College "my home county college" and I dream of opening a business in Washington County to help Veterans and people that need Emotional Support dogs as well as dogs to give them stability and assistance to give them their independence. I want to be a productive member of community and Parole will allow me to do that.

I ask you to please consider everything not just what I have accomplished but that the men and women that are here beside me have also. I have taken an MIT Coding class to learn how to build websites, and successfully built one and am working on one for the business that I will be opening. I'm currently in a MIT Non-Violent Communication Philosophy class "with MIT

students" that I never would have thought possible before.

Right now I'm working roughly 250 hours a ~~week~~^{month}, I would work more if I could but ~~that~~^{they won't let me}
I get \$150.00 a month for a paycheck and I pay a \$30.00 a month college payment. While I
definitely am learning how to manage my money, I wish I was making a living while doing so.
With Parole it would be a life changer for me and my mother who has been living by herself for
about 10 years and struggling to make ends meet. My drive to work 250 hours a month will
carry over to the outside and I want to give back to my Community in ways i never knew I could
before. Parole will open will open doors for not only me but the women and men that have
been forgotten behind these walls to prove that we can be upstanding members of the
community. Please give me a chance to show that I can make my dreams a reality and I can
support my family. By bringing Parole back to Maine it will Give me a chance to show my worth
and that what happened 20 plus years ago is not who I am today. Thank You for your time
today.

Good morning,

I am writing in SUPPORT of reestablishing parole in Maine without hesitation. Men and women who have shown through their actions and deeds to be rehabilitated, should have the opportunity to complete their sentences outside the prison walls.

Please consider my urgent request! Continued years of punishment is not the answer.

Sincerely,

Kelly N. Taylor

So. Thomaston, ME

Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Judiciary committee on a bill that I am very passionate about seeing passed: LD 842, an Act to Reestablish Parole in Maine.

My name is Kelly Taylor, and I live in South Thomaston. I am a Social Studies teacher in Rockland and have been for nearly 40 years having taught all subject areas in grades 7-12. So today, I want to speak to you from the point of view of a teacher whose students write Legislative Documents and hold committee hearings, and debate the pros and cons of their bills. And I ask: what makes a good bill?

In the words of former President Obama: “A good compromise, a good piece of legislation, is like a good sentence. Or a good piece of music. Everybody can recognize it. They say, ‘Huh. It works. It makes sense.’”

Reestablishing Parole in Maine DOES make sense! In a government system where both the Preambles to the U.S. and Maine Constitution list as a primary goal of government to “establish Justice” not having an active Parole board does not make sense. The Justice system’s use of a Parole Board is a check and balance against injustice and against one branch of government, i.e., the executive branch having too much absolute power over such matters as reprieves, commutations and pardons. A Parole Board would allow more voices to be heard, especially those voices who are the incarcerated members of our society and who want to do the right things.

In today’s world of Restorative Justice practices, incarcerated men and women are looking for ways that they can be restored, rehabilitated, and are eager to exercise what they have learned. Over the last 5 years, I have been a frequent visitor to events at the MSP. I have seen how many men are actively involved in making the world they live in a better place through access to higher education, through Hospice volunteering, and through sharing their hopes and dreams for the future.

When I was an 8th grade social studies teacher at Rockland Middle school, I had an advisory of 6th, 7th, & 8th grade students. One spring day a 6th grade student named Leo Hylton walked into my room to join my advisory, and I can still see his smiling face. He continued with me through 7th grade and in 8th grade was also in my History class and in my home room. I got to know and like him pretty well, and we connected. Leo was a foster child who moved on to another school, but over the years he kept in touch. Five weeks after his 18th birthday Leo committed a

very serious crime. The trauma of his young life contributed to the crime, but today at 31, Leo is a changed man full of wisdom, kindness, and compassion.

Leo reconnected with me while at MSP when he completed his Associates degree in Liberal Studies, and I began to make frequent visitations with him. I was invited to three Hospice conferences and saw for myself the restorative power of hope, caring, and love. The men all gave their testimonies, and there weren't many dry eyes in the room. As more men joined the group from the BOLDUC facility, two other former students who were brothers came and talked with me. Thankfully, they have since been released. Overall, I left feeling very inspired by all the men and their genuine commitment to the betterment of their fellow man. I have also attended several Talent shows and a legislative forum put on by the NAACP. I always leave there wanting more time with them.

A highlight of my life as a teacher was being invited in 2019 to witness the graduation ceremony at the MSP in which Leo Hylton received his Bachelor of Arts degree with a 3.96 GPA. In the lobby, then Warden Randall Liberty approached me and said, "It's a victory" which it certainly was. As we speak Leo is earning his Master's degree through George Mason University in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Every day Leo acts for the good of his fellow man. He is a true man of faith and lives it every day. He writes a column for the online magazine and newspaper *The Mainer* called "Shining Light on Humanity." I encourage you all to check it out.

In all of these visits, and in all of my day to day communications with Leo, I am truly inspired by him and by these men, who do not want to be remembered for the worst decision of their lives, but by how they can and are changed when given the opportunity and with hope, care, and love. We must restore humanity to the justice system, and LD-842 is a huge step in the right direction for Criminal Justice Reform.

Therefore, I strongly urge the committee that this bill Ought to Pass and a Parole Board should be reestablished in the State of Maine.

To Whom It May Concern,

10-13-22

I have been incarcerated for twenty-one years for taking a woman's life. I took her from her two daughters, her parents and other family and friends. I also took myself away from my two sons and daughter, parents, and other family and friends. I caused indescribable pain to so many people and it is something I live with every day. I can never take back that act and I will never expect forgiveness. I caused heartache beyond words, and I am so sorry. I know that the person I am now is not the person I was at that time. So many aspects of my life back then are beyond understanding. At times it feels that it cannot possibly be true. How did I do something so horrible?

For the years I have spent locked behind walls and razor wire, I have ached for my children, lived with shame, and felt a failure as a mother. I have spent numerous times in a very dark place wishing I no longer existed, trying to cope with a wide range of emotions due to what I have done, the damage that resulted, as well as the fact that I lost my freedom.

However, I know that my crime does not define who I am. I am still a good person and have a lot to offer society in my future. I have learned about myself, worked on my faults and flaws, and have been supported by many others who have been and are here with me. There really are good people in prison. Incarceration also changes people in many positive ways. It gives them time to realize what is missing from their lives to help them live as normal as possible. It is up to them to decide to implement the tools, skills and influence they have gained. There are individuals who work with us that genuinely care about us and the work they do to aid us. They would not be here if they did not want to help us. We have also been visited by people who feel that we are not disposable; musicians, speakers on topics from religion to prison reform, teachers, legislators, non-profits, published authors, artists, and numerous others. We have also witnessed women who have succeeded in their transition back into society. Women who worked hard while they were here and appreciate freedom.

During my time here, I have been very active, involved in numerous programs as well as working several jobs. I have not lived my time feeling sorry for myself or been bitter about my circumstances. I have participated in classes ranging from Anger Management to Victims Impact. I am currently enrolled in college pursuing a degree in Business. I will also be taking classes around Behavioral Science, as I wish to work with people who struggle with mental illness and just being able to survive the difficulties, they face each day. I hope to work with veterans in need of support for everything from mental health to assistance with their everyday needs. I am a veteran myself, something I will always be proud of.

For me, parole would be a second chance at life. A chance to prove I am willing and able to be a productive member of society. A chance to hopefully make up for the time lost with children if they desire to be a part of my life again. I also desperately want to spend time with my parents who are aging and in failing health. I feel that I owe them that as their daughter. I am cognizant of the fact that nothing I do in my future will make up for my crime. It is not an easy thing to face.

I have learned that being incarceration can only do so much in the way of positivity. While there are people who do not wish to change, people who continue to return to prison due to substance abuse, there are many of us that know we are ready to be released instead of spending even more years locked up. Twenty years is significant amount of time in the eyes of many. Of course, there are always going to be people who do not believe in rehabilitation for certain crimes, opponents of parole and second chances. To them I say "Would you feel the same way if it was someone you loved? Would you want them to have a second chance?"



Laura L. Kirk

Richard A. McEckern
Resident # 2273

November 28, 2022

To: Parole Committee Members
State of Maine

I did not get a chance to speak,
and I would like for my voice to
be heard on this issue of parole.

I've been incarcerated since Nov. of
1978. I am serving a life sentence
for shooting a man who was part
of a crew that was planning to
use dynamite on my Mom & Dad's
home.

I have no criminal record in any
state or Country. I am honorably discharged
from the U.S. Army. Viet-Nam era
w/ no in country duty.

I have no doubt that I do not pose
any threat to anyone in society, and
could have safely been released on
Parole about 30 years ago.

Respectfully,

Richard A. McEckern

My name is Adam Groves

The following is what the option of parole would mean to me.

IT would mean hope. A new fresh
start to live the rest of my life with
my family. To able to prove that A
working system can help change A
persons wrong negative ways to be a
Role model to society. To be able to
live life to the fullest and enjoy
everything that comes my way.

Last, Parole would let me know that I
was good. Did all the right things to be
ready for the next step. freedom

Thank you

Abdi Nur #116860

It's appreciated that you parole officers are giving us incarcerated individuals an opportunity to go back into society to show our communities and future employers that we have become better people. We have followed programs, worked positions, and earned diplomas to help others in our communities. We as individuals can accomplish a lot while being incarcerated, so please consider accepting this opportunity for ourselves to give back to society.

My name is Victor Frascone

The following is what the option of parole would mean to me.

My health is on a steady
decline. It is almost to the
point that I will be unable to
care for myself alone. The
chance to be granted parole
would allow me the chance
to ~~build~~ use the mobility I
have left to get a job, find a
home, and most important a
chance to build a relationship
with my children. I want to be
the example of what a inmate can
do on parole to pave the way
for future parolees. Thank you

To the Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole:

I'm writing in enthusiastic and heartfelt support of reinstating parole in Maine. As a philosopher teaching at Colby College who has taught about issues regarding not only the incarceration system but also forgiveness, restitution, and justice, I am convinced that Maine's lack of parole is an injustice that should immediately be rectified. My conviction is that parole would fulfill the justice system's aims of greater safety, greater accountability, rehabilitation, and justice. I am grateful for the Committee's work and hopeful of a good outcome of your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Lydia Moland

Friday, Oct 14, 2022

Senator Hickman, Representative Warren and honorable members of the Commission to Study the Reinstatement of Parole,

I am reading this testimony on behalf of men at Maine State Prison. We understand the Commission may not be allowed to meet the men and women incarcerated in Maine State Prison and Maine Correctional Center who would be most impacted by the return of parole. We also understand that at least one Commission member has expressed fear about visiting Maine State Prison. Several Commission members visit Maine prisons on a regular basis and we are deeply grateful for their ongoing investment in our rehabilitation, growth, and well-being. We would have loved the opportunity to speak with you directly, to meet you in person, share our personal stories, pathways toward healing, forgiveness, and redemption, and to help you see us as human beings worthy of a second chance to reintegrate back into society as contributing and valued community members.

We are in prison because we have caused grave harm. For many of us, that was one destructive act when we were young, confused, hurting and broken. We each take full responsibility for the harm that we caused and seek pathways toward paying forward what we can't pay back. We are the people with the longest sentences for whom parole would make the most difference - for us and our families. We offer these short snapshots to acquaint you with who we are and how we have been devoted to personal growth, accountability, responsibility, and justice over the time of our incarceration. The opportunity to be considered for parole would allow us to demonstrate to society, and to those we harmed personally, our ability to grow, change, offer healing, and become contributing members of society.

We are:

AI - I teach art classes in the SMU, which is the most restricted housing unit in the prison; I provide peer support in the Intensive Mental Health Unit, I paint murals throughout the prison, and I push to bring more art-based programs into the prison. I need hope and support to vision what might be possible beyond prison. I dream of painting murals as a freelance artist. I have 22 years left on my sentence.

Brad - I am a Program Facilitator, Chairman of the Longtimers Group, Recovery Coach, Health Start Facilitator, Recreation Assistant, and I am soon going to enter College. I want to offer volunteer work and be an advocate for Criminal Justice Reform if released on parole. I am serving a Life Sentence.

Buddy - I am a hospice volunteer, I work with service dog training, I am the Commander of the American Legion, I hold a leadership position in Industries, I am a mentor and peer support person. I want to help vets, I want to support or create another service dog program, both for veterans and for hospitals to provide comfort to children. I have 42 years remaining on my sentence.

THANK YOU.

Dan - I am on the Executive Board of the NAACP. I am the Prison Liaison with Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am a college graduate, peer mentor and tutor, recovery coach, and certified yoga instructor, and will soon be entering a Master's program. I want to help people with trauma healing, working with students and trauma-impacted people about how to make better choices with their lives. I seek to interrupt cycles of harm in communities, to recognize and address trauma in a constructive manner. I am serving a Life sentence.

Ed - I have attained my HiSET diploma, completed numerous personal development classes like business, personal finance, and art. Caring for my mental and spiritual health and rehabilitation, I participated in a series of Cognitive-Behavioral Health programs and engaged in faith-based programming that now has me in the middle of Prison Fellowship Academy's intensive 14-month personal growth academy. I have completed the Master Gardener program and Vermicomposting 101. I am currently working on completing the Master Food Preserver program and within the next year I aim to enroll in the Bee Keeping class and NCCER to learn construction skills and safety. All of this is in hope of a better future. I am doing my own self-directed studies on homesteading through books I purchased. If granted parole, I want to teach kids the importance of eating and living right, producing and keeping their own food and taking care of the planet by making use of what the earth provides. I have already started investing in my plan to move to a very small town in the Dominican Republic to help the children in that community learn from my poor decisions and the painful lessons I have learned. I still have 10 years left on my sentence.

Ephriam - I have spent almost 14 years devoting my life to mentoring, tutoring, and life coaching. I serve as a faith leader and guide in life to many. I engage in curriculum development, crafting facilitator training manuals, and other mechanisms to help prepare people to help others create a foundation for their lives and futures. As a man of faith, I work to live out Scripture in my life and lead by example. If granted parole, I will follow through on my plans to create an academy designed to train others in peer mentoring, personal growth and development, social justice advocacy and activism, restorative justice, and life coaching. I will be building on the well established life of service I lived before my time in prison. I still have 4 and a half years left on my sentence.

John - I am a certified Recovery Coach and have been doing the rewarding work of coaching my peers one-on-one in their recovery. I am now pursuing a college education and maintaining a 3.9 GPA. If I were afforded the opportunity of parole, I would bring my recovery coaching experience into the community and do the best I could to make up for the harmful choices I once made. I have been incarcerated for over 15 years and have about 36 years left on my sentence.

THANK YOU.

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Josh - I work with University of Maine Cooperative Extension as a Master Gardener. I am in a BA program at the University of Maine in Augusta, with a 3.9 GPA. I mentor other residents who are struggling the same way I did behaviorally. I work in the Industries program as a welder and CNC machine operator. I helped to establish the Earned Living Unit. With my Personal Fitness Trainer and Recovery Coach Certification I train and coach other residents. I handle dogs for the Mission Working Dogs service dog training program. Parole would allow me to build and develop my own business. I have the skills to open a machine shop or a fitness gym. My goal is to hire other people released from prison and provide decent paying wages. I currently have 6 years remaining to serve on a 33-year sentence.

Leo: I committed a violent act one month after turning 18 for which I received a sentence of 50-90 years. I was a traumatized and broken young man. I am now 32 years old. I take full responsibility for the harm I caused. I have spent the past 14 years in self growth, seeking to offer accountability and apology for the harm I caused. I have completed high school and Associates, Bachelors and Masters degrees since my incarceration, and am applying to a PhD program this year. I am a Visiting Instructor and mentor at Colby College, a restorative justice

practitioner of 5 years, a columnist for Mainer, a radio show host for WMPG, a peer tutor and mentor, a Recovery Coach, a support person for men in the Intensive Mental Health Unit and throughout the prison, and have been a hospice volunteer for 7 years. I have 25.5 years left on my sentence. With parole, I would use my degrees to become the counselor for young men I always wanted to be, while working to create meaningful avenues for accountability and healing through Restorative Justice.

Matty - I love getting people involved in yoga and meditation (which is a personal practice for me.) I focus on supporting veterans, training service dogs for veterans, and cultivating community in the housing units. I would like to start a service dog training center and get back into doing residential home care for the community. I have a life sentence.

Nadim - I tutor and mentor residents preparing to take the High School Equivalency Test and college placement exams. I am a certified Peer Educator, Recovery Coach, Adult Literacy Educator, and book facilitator for the Maine Humanities Council. I am also actively involved in the prison's Islamic community. My degree program at USM is Leadership & Organizational Studies, which will prepare me to work toward breaking down racial, ethnic, and religious barriers that often prevent successful reintegration into society. I have completed and continue to participate in dozens of rehabilitative and vocational programs. If I qualify for parole, I expect to be deported to India, where I have an incredibly supportive family. I have a 50 year sentence with a release date of 2043.

THANK YOU

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Nate - I am working on a Bachelor's in Religious Studies, serve as a hospice volunteer and certified recovery coach, and work in the Chaplain's office. I am engaging in continued personal development, mentoring in the SMU. If granted parole I want to continue recovery coaching in an outside community, working in the recovery field. I also hope to reenter the workforce as a machinist, which is a field of high demand where I have 13 years of experience. I still have 4 years remaining on my sentence.

Pete - I am in college, I work in Industries, I serve and mentor in MSP's Intensive Mental Health Unit. Until now I haven't had any hope to imagine life beyond prison, but if that could be possible, I want to help my Dad in the business of supporting homeless people secure housing and serving as a mentor for youths in Boys and Girls clubs and boys' homes. I have a life sentence.

Richie - I work in Industries on projects and training people how to use equipment. I am an informal counselor to other men here. I train service dogs for veterans, I take parenting classes, I maintain a good life, trying to make it the best I can. I am reconnecting with my family, and through helping others am working to redeem myself in society for the harm I caused. I have 22 more years on my sentence, after good time.

Steve - During my 17 years in prison I have worked diligently at understanding and atoning for the choices that led me to prison. I have dedicated the past 13 years to education and am entering a doctoral program. I am a certified Substance Use Rehabilitation Technician and a certified Mental Health Rehabilitation Technician and served with the Hospice Council. I have worked to introduce recovery coaching at the prison which we now have in every Facility in Maine. I am involved with yoga, meditation, and exploring healing modalities that will support marginalized populations. I serve on the board of the Restorative Practices Steering Committee. If I qualify for parole, I would give back

by helping others who are struggling with mental health and substance abuse, especially inside county jails and prisons. I would support my family as well as my victim's mother. I have 21 years left.

Scott - I facilitate 2 religious groups, which I have done for 35 years. I am furthering my education in ministry. I am a member of the interfaith council, seeking to improve conditions for religious practice and the pursuit of personal and rehabilitative processes. I want to actualize my religious values of stewardship of the earth, environmental care, supporting social justice issues, and bringing people closer together through being a voice to speak toward affirming the humanity and redemptive qualities in people, especially in youth and young adults. I am serving a life sentence.

THANK YOU.

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Ryan - I was in the first cohort to begin college under the Second Chance Pell-Grant, receiving a bachelor's degree and am now entering a master's program in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, with a focus on advancing education and labor skills amongst incarcerated individuals to increase their likelihood of meaningful employment upon reentry and to decrease the chances of recidivism. I work as an academic coach and tutor in my liaison role between the University of Maine at Augusta and MSP. I am a recovery coach, I train shelter dogs for adoption, collaborate on the restorative justice committee, and give feedback on tools designed by Recidiviz to support data driven programs in Maine prisons. If parole were open to me, I would work with those with addiction problems. I would utilize my Master's degree to help immigrants integrate into the workforce, and promote cultural sensitivity amongst employers. I have been incarcerated for 19 years and have approximately 19 years remaining.

Tim - I work in Industries on projects and supervise 5 workers. I have been working to improve my communication and conflict management skills. I train service dogs for veterans and after my release I look forward to continuing to train service dogs, especially for the veterans I served with. I have 18 years left.

Tracy - I am a recovery coach, a college student, and a peer mentor. I am active in civic groups, I am a member of the Resident Advisory Council where we serve as a communication bridge between the resident population and prison management and administration. I am also a long-time hospice volunteer. I have participated in numerous programs, such as emotional literacy, personal transformation, and many more. I want to be a substance use counselor, a profession I am currently working towards. I have 10 years left on my sentence.

Virgil - I am a peer mentor in the Intensive Mental Health Unit. I provide plumbing, bio cleaning, and electrical services. I am waiting until my release to marry my fiancée, with whom I will be working to serve at a funeral home and in church. I have 7 years remaining on my sentence.

In closing, we hope the authorities will decide to allow you to come visit these men in person so they can show you who they are today, what they have accomplished and what they are continuing to build. The Maine Department of Corrections, Commissioner Randy Liberty, and Warden Matt Magnussen hold a visionary approach with the Maine Model of Corrections. The men who we spoke about today are the living proof that the Maine Model of Corrections works. They are not the same people they were when they came through those doors in chains. They have thrown themselves into educational programming and invested themselves in rehabilitative opportunities to develop their self understanding, self esteem, and maturity, to provide service to their

community on the inside, and to develop marketable skills that can be applied on the outside.

If you had the opportunity to meet these men in person, you would come away *shocked* at the cost of keeping them locked up. Both the *exorbitant* economic cost to the state, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the lost potential to our communities. These men have been at their worst place and because of the work they have engaged in during their incarceration, they are ready to be at their best, to take their place in their communities, helping their families, interrupting violence, mentoring youth who need help, and contributing to the economy. Please afford them the right to demonstrate who they are today through reestablishing parole with universal eligibility.

Thank you.

Linda Dolloff

Lani Graham

Doug Dunlap

Jan Collins

November 15, 2022

To the members of the legislative committee on the possible reestablishment of parole:

It has come to my attention that your committee is debating this important question, and I am hoping my thoughts may be of some interest and help. I am a lawyer and retired professor who represented persons with mental illness in forensic and correctional systems for 13 years (as Deputy Public Defender in Trenton NJ, where the state maximum security forensic hospital and a maximum security state prison were located, and then as director of the State Division of Mental Health Advocacy, a subcabinet position vested with the representation of all persons in the state subject to institutionalization with mental illness), and litigated at every court level from police court to the US Supreme Court. I taught at New York Law School for over 30 years, where my course load regularly included Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure: Adjudication, and where I ran a 13-course program in mental disability law (and a Masters-level program in mental disability law studies), including courses in Mental Disability and Criminal Law, and in Mental Health Issues in Jails and Prisons. I have written 34 books and nearly 350 articles, the majority of which dealing with the mental disability/criminal law overlap. My treatise on this area of the law -- MENTAL DISABILITY LAW: CIVIL AND CRIMINAL (Lexis Law Publishing 2016) (three volumes) (with Prof. Heather Ellis Cucolo) (most recent update, Spring 2022) (updated semi-annually) -- is universally seen as the standard text (I have attached my CV).

I am writing now to urge this committee to adopt legislation that would re-establish parole in this state with a special focus on prisoners with serious mental illness.

There is no question that a significant percentage of prisoners (over half) are mentally ill,¹ and that prisons are poorly equipped to deal with this population.² A comprehensive study of the California system lays out the issues clearly:

Thousands of people with mental illness are currently serving terms in California prisons. These individuals receive inadequate medical and psychiatric care, serve longer terms than the average inmate, and are released without adequate preparation and support for their return to society.³

Keeping this population in prisons with no hopes of release (or transfer to health care facilities) can only exacerbate this situation. Although we know that, in those states that do have parole, ex-prisoners who have a mental illness are “significantly more likely to fail the terms of their probation and parole” and “around twice as likely to have their parole suspended,”⁴ we also know that this is, in significant part, caused by technical requirements of parole conditions and inadequate treatment in the community.⁵

¹ See e.g., NAT'L ALL. ON MENTAL ILLNESS, DEPT. OF JUSTICE STUDY: MENTAL ILLNESS IN PRISON INMATES WORSE THAN PAST ESTIMATES 1 (2006).

² There is frequently no training of correctional officers as to how to best deal with mentally ill prisoners. See e.g., Mariah Woodson, *The Best We Can Be: How Toxic Masculinity Creates a Second Inescapable Situation for Inmates*, 24 PUB. INT. L. REP. 124, 136 (2019).

³ W. David Ball, *Mentally Ill Prisoners in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation: Strategies for Improving Treatment and Reducing Recidivism*, 24 J. CONTEMP. HEALTH L. & POL'Y 1, 1 (2007).

⁴ Michael Mullan, *How U.S. Society Has Treated Those with Mental Illnesses*, 24 RICH. PUB. INT. L. REV. 79, 110 (2021).

⁵ Jillian Peterson & Kevin Heinz, *Understanding Offenders with Serious Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System*, 42 MITCHELL HAMLINE L. REV. 537, 546-47 (2016).

Nearly thirty years ago, Prof. Arthur Lurigio (one of the world's leading experts on this topic) and two co-authors emphasized that "Prisoners with mental illness can serve longer prison terms because of the absence of an approved parole-discharge plan that includes housing, psychiatric care, and substance abuse treatment services."⁶ In other words, this is old news.

If parole – with meaningful parole terms and accessible quality treatment – were to be made available to prisoners with mental illness, we might be able to take one important step in ameliorating the conditions that currently exist in virtually every state's correctional system.

I appreciate your consideration of these remarks.

Respectfully,

Michael L. Perlin, Esq.

Professor Emeritus of Law

Founding Director, International Mental Disability Law Reform Project

Co-founder, Mental Disability Law and Policy Associates

New York Law School

185 West Broadway

New York, NY 10013

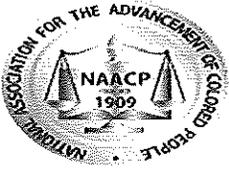
michael.perlin@nyls.edu

mlperlin@mdlpa.net

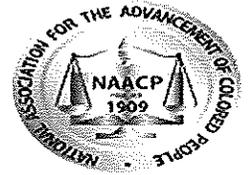
(CV attached)

⁶ Arthur J. Lurigio, Angie Rollins & John Fallon, *The Effects of Serious Mental Illness on Offender Reentry*, 68 FED. PROBATION 45, 47 (Sept. 2004).

MAINE STATE PRISON BRANCH OF THE



N.A.A.C.P.



807 CUSHING ROAD WARREN, ME 04864-4600

Foster Bates President
Daniel Fortune Executive Secretary

Jeffrey Taylor Vice President
Shawn Tuttle Treasurer

Parole Study Commission

LD842: An Act to Reestablished Parole

Sponsored by: Representative Jeffrey Evangelos

When Maine Legislators decided to abolish parole in 1976, they failed to consider the "Equal Protection" rights of Maine citizens within the state's jurisdiction and the discriminatory nature of the abolishment.

The Fourteenth Amendment forbids a state to "deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law." Which means, "that all persons similarly situated should be treated alike." If a person is incarcerated in the Maine Department of Correction from another jurisdiction, if that jurisdiction has parole, that person can transfer his parole to Maine and become a Maine parolee. However, if you are citizen of Maine, and incarcerated, you are ban from parole, although you and the out-of-state transfer are similarly situated.

Not only did the legislators in 1976 infringe upon the "Equal Protection" rights of Maine citizens, state legislators abolished parole in a discriminatory manner, "Discrimination especially occurs when individuals or groups are unfairly treated in a way which is worse than other people are treated, on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in certain groups or social categories. It involves restricting members of one group from opportunities or privileges that are available to members of another group." The legislators in 1976, undoubtedly discriminated against Maine citizens when they abolished parole in Maine and continue to allow incarcerated persons from other states to be on parole in Maine. This is an obvious disparity of treatment with a negative impact on all Maine citizens, especially those citizens who are incarcerated.

The State must have a compelling interest to prohibit Maine citizens from parole and yet allow out-of-state transfers to be on parole in Maine. Maine citizens have a fundamental right to be treated equally and not be discriminated against for being a Maine citizen. Parole is not a right, it is a privilege, and Maine citizens should have the same privilege that out-of-state transfers have when they serve their sentence in Maine. For instance, the three men in the Pamala Smart case, served 95% of their sentence at Maine State Prison before being paroled back to New Hampshire, one of the three men is on parole right here in Maine. All three of the men used the Maine Department of Corrections rehabilitation and treatment program to achieve the necessary credentials to be approved for parole. The same rehabilitation and treatment programs that Maine incarcerated citizens attend.

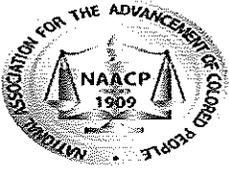
The question we must ask as a society, do you believe in law and order? If you do, then you want everyone being released from prison to succeed. Therefore, reestablishing parole for Maine incarcerated citizens is the right thing to do.

Respectfully submitted,

MSP NAACP Executive Committee

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Respectfully submitted,

MSP NAACP Executive Committee

MSP NAACP Executive Committee

Parole Study Commission

Testimonial

To: Parole Study Commission, State Representatives and Senators

My name is Foster Bates, I have been incarcerated for 21 years on a life sentence. Since the day of my arrest (August 7th, 2001), I have unequivocally professed and maintained my innocence. I have been shouting from the mountain tops that I did not hurt anyone.

Fifteen years into my life sentence, three witnesses came forward with newly discovered (exculpatory) evidence that shows and proves that I DID NOT commit the murder and rape of my friend Tammy Dickson. One of the three witnesses testified at my June 13, 2016, DNA Post-conviction Review hearing. She provided an overwhelming and powerful testimony, when she testified for the first time before the court that Tammy Dickson was alive after I left her apartment, **“When he went down the stairs I went right up and knocked on the door, and she didn’t answer right off. I knocked again, and then she answered the door. She answered the door in what I thought was kind of inappropriate; it was lingerie. Her hair was a mess, she had like a rode that was like sexy attire, smelled like sex. And I asked to use her phone and she wasn’t disheveled or nothing; she was fine...”** *(June 13, 2016 DNA PCR Hearing Transcript)*

For the last twenty-one years of my life at Maine State Prison, I have laid my head down on a pillow and closed my eyes at night with insufferable emotions; anguish, despair, and hopelessness. Knowing that witnesses; three complete strangers have come forward with newly discovered (exculpatory) evidence that proves that I did not commit this crime, makes each day at Maine State Prison all the more unbearable and agonizing for me. Psychological torture! My soul feels like it’s in the chambers of torment and never-ending sorrow. Parole cannot give back the twenty-one years I have lost from being away from my family; however, it most certainly can provide the opportunity for me to rebuild my life with the people I love and help increase public safety with the knowledge I have received about rehabilitation and treatment programs during this incarceration. At the time of Tammy’s death, I was a college student, studying Criminology and Law with the aspirations of becoming a Law School Professor. Since my incarceration, I have graduated from the University of Maine, Augusta with a Bachelor degree. I have been the president of Maine State Prison Branch of NAACP for the past 7-years, and a mentor to the younger residents at Maine State Prison.

Parole provides the gateway to forgiveness, redemption and hope for Maine incarcerated citizens. Parole will present Maine incarcerated citizens with the opportunity to restore their life while continuing to pay their debt to society in a positive manner. Reestablishing Parole in Maine is the best rehabilitative, corrective behavioral and reentry program the state can provide. Ninety-five percent of people who are incarcerated will be released from prison and parole is the best reentry program for anyone being released from a correctional institution. **“Parole does not shorten the length of a sentence. Instead, parole changes the manner in which a sentence is**

served in that the parolee remains under the custody of the institution from which he is released but executes the unexpired portion of his sentence outside of confinement..." with the "threat of return to prison to serve out his sentence there if he violates the conditions of parole." (*Collins v. State* 161 Me at 451 (Me. 1969), and *Mottram v. State*, 232 A.2d 809, 813-14 (Me. 1967). The question we must ask as a society, do you believe in law and order? If you do, then you want everyone being released from prison to succeed. Therefore, reestablishing parole for Maine incarcerated citizens is the right thing to do.

Respectfully submitted,

Foster Bates

Who is Nadim Haque, and what has he done since 1996?

Born in India to a conservative but well-educated Sunni Muslim family, I came to America in 1991 to pursue an undergraduate degree from the University of Southern Maine. Arrested for murder and aggravated assault in May 1996 and convicted in 1997, I began a fifty-year prison sentence as a convicted murderer at the Maine State Prison (MSP) in November 1997 (projected release date is 2043.)

Prisons are rife with difficulties, and surviving imprisonment requires humility, patience, and finding a meaning or purpose in prison life. At the start of my sentence, I struggled with mental health issues, but as time passed, I decided to seek mental health counseling, educate and better myself, and help my fellow residents. However, I did all this with the knowledge that I may never be a free man again or be well into my seventies when I get released from prison.

My incarceration began at the maximum security prison in November 1997 but based on my conduct and rehabilitation, my classification level quickly dropped from maximum to medium security, and, in November 2021 (thanks to Commissioner Liberty and his team, Warden Maggnusson and his team, and other staff members) with approximately twenty years remaining in my sentence, I was moved from Close custody housing to the newly created Earned Living Unit (ELU) at Maine State Prison.

This unit is the brainchild of MDOC Commissioner Randall Liberty, Warden Matthew Maggnusson, and a team of correctional staff members and residents of MSP. When Commissioner Liberty was the Warden of MSP, he and his team took the bold initiative to close the 50-bed Supermax in 2016. This left the unit empty and ripe for repurposing. This past fall, I was among the first of the eleven residents selected from a pool of approximately seven hundred residents who had the privilege to move into the empty 50-bed Supermax re-named ELU. Our tasks included cleaning up the unit and helping create a community based on the “principle of normality,” the guiding principle of Norway’s penal system.

According to this principle, life inside the prison should mirror life outside (barring any security or safety issues) because offenders only lose their liberty due to their wrongdoings and nothing else. Punishment should not be the loss of human dignity and individual responsibility. The prison experience should resemble normal life in society as closely as possible to prepare the individuals for release and reintegration into society. Instead of “wings” and “units,” Norwegian prisoners live in small “pod” communities consisting of houses that accommodate 6 or 7 people. Prisoners wear civilian clothes, live in single-occupant rooms with a private toilet/shower, and share a kitchen and other facilities. Copying the Norwegian model in its entirety is impossible. Consequently, strategies for developing a “community style” living space in the most dreaded wing of the prison required innovative thinking. We decided to adapt the Biden Administration’s “physical infrastructure,” campaign and give it our spin: Our community’s focus would be on transforming the “physical infrastructure” as well as developing a meaningful “social infrastructure.”

The physical infrastructure necessitated cleaning up the unit by spending hundreds of hours sanding, scrubbing, power-washing, disinfecting, cleaning, and painting cells, hallways, cell doors, and showers, covered with almost three decades of graffiti, religious emblems, racist epithets, hate symbols and bigoted slurs. Where do we begin to clean layers of human excrement, other bodily fluids, rotten food materials, and Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray (pepper spray) embedded in the cracks and corners of windowsills, doors, and cell walls? One wall, one door, one window at a time. How do we erase hundreds of thousands of memories, and the cries for help engraved on cell walls? Painstakingly and thoroughly. Sanding and scrubbing the grimy walls, windows, and doors reminded me of the people who had been here previously. It seemed to me that their drawings were talking to me and relaying their stories of anger, pain, and agony. So much misery and suffering. I began to wonder: how do these individuals cope when they rejoin society at the end of their sentence? How could this place have prepared these individuals to be productive and law-abiding members of their outside communities? What lessons would they have learned while locked-in 22-to-24 hours a day in a room the size of a small bathroom?

Among the dark, vulgar symbolism, I also found prayers for salvation and hope, poems of love and courage, “shout-outs” to moms, dads, girlfriends, partners, and wives, and depictions

of Jesus with demons. As I continued to scrub down the sketches of flowers and thorns, portrayals of skulls, spears, and bones, Disney characters, and illustrations of demons and monsters, I said a silent prayer for God to have mercy on these troubled souls; may God bless us and help us establish a community based on love, hope, and repair. Amen.

Establishing a social infrastructure entailed deciding on the ground rules as to how our community will function, by what method we would govern ourselves, and importantly, what kind of help and support our larger prison community should expect from us. Laying a foundation of a community behind prison walls is difficult. It requires patience, trust, honesty, teamwork, and integrity. Additionally, we quickly discovered that determining basic rules of conduct, organizing weekly house meetings, and assigning house chores required the skill set of a seasoned mediator. Prison life is full of despair, violence, and difficulties. Fortunately, as a bunch of seasoned “residents” (most of us in the group have been in prison for more than 20 years), we are all aware of the prison norms and culture. We all had to adjust to the deprivation of liberty, separation of loved ones and friends, and loss of individual and personal choices and control over all aspects of our daily life. At some point in our prison life, we all had to face our insecurities, fear, idleness, and loss of self-worth. Thus, laying the foundation of our community agreements was not that difficult. However, how do we tackle the concept of “convict code”? This code hovers like a dark cloud and dictates our behavior in prison and interactions with other residents, staff members, and volunteers.

The code is a set of “dos” and “don'ts” engraved in the residents' minds in correctional institutions all over the United States. For example, no ratting or telling, minding your own business, not being friendly with staff members and prison authorities, and always being told to be and act tough, suck up the pain, and not give an inch to fear or weakness (these said prison norms or ethics are the antitheses of community.) Importantly, our biggest challenge was how we walk away from concepts such as you are with “us” (residents) or with “them” (prison staff). To address these concerns, we decided that our community must be inclusive for everyone in this institution and that the success of our community depended on our collective abilities to resolve disputes and conflicts. We selected the Restorative practice model for resolving conflicts and agreed to be mindful of the needs of all community members and respect the values and belief

systems of all the residents. Simply put, ELU must not become any run-of-the-mill prison unit. It is for those residents who have demonstrated through their actions that they have not only undergone a spiritual and personal change but have also motivated their peers to maximize and realize their full potential. We kept our motto simple yet effective: “*Needs of the community come before our individual needs.*” So far (thank God and team Liberty and Magnusson for the help and support), things have been going on as planned. Currently, ELU houses 30 residents. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that I could someday be a part of a team composed of Correctional staff members and residents that has the potential to affect correctional institutions all over the country.

Leo Hylton, an incarcerated Master’s graduate of George Mason University, describes the ELU in his article “*Shining Light on Humanity.*” He writes in the pertinent part: ELU is a place that not only fosters the concept of “community” and “allows more freedom than anywhere else in prison” for residents to engage in educational, religious, and vocational programs, but also places great responsibility on the residents to export the “community” model to the rest of the prison population (Leo Hylton, “*Shining Light on Humanity,*” Mainer, March 2022, pg. 10.) As one of the “30 [fortunate] men” of ELU, I cannot agree more with Mr. Hylton.

Currently, I work in the prison’s education department, tutoring and mentoring residents preparing to take the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and college placement exams (Accuplacer). I am a certified Peer Educator, Recovery Coach, Adult Literacy Educator, and book facilitator for the Maine Humanities Council. I am also actively involved in the prison's Islamic community and answer questions on Islamic practices and beliefs, also dispelling misconceptions about Islam.

This Fall, when I saw the excitement and energy among those residents who qualified for the Second Chance Act and Pell Grants programs, I too decided to go back to college. Since I am not a U.S. citizen, I did not qualify for these grants and funds. Once again, Commissioner Liberty and his team, and Warden Magnusson and his team, came to my rescue by offering to cover half of my tuition costs and expenses. Thanks to the generosity of these individuals, I am taking two classes (4 credit hours total) and after completion of this semester I will have

approximately thirty-six credit hours to complete my degree from the University of Southern Maine in Leadership & Organizational studies with a concentration in LOS Integrated Professional Studies.

This program appealed to me because I was looking for an opportunity for personal growth and improvement to learn practical and transferable tools to apply in prison settings as well as outside the prison. The program is designed to enhance my decision-making and communication skills, and teach me about the workings of organizations, organizational structure, and organizational culture. It will allow me to explore how individuals and groups interact within organizations and help me closely examine and learn leadership skills. These are pro-social skills which I will need in prison as well as outside the prison complex.

Furthermore, I believe that education should promote social awareness, foster respectful dialogue and curiosity, and nurture creativity and critical thinking. I am enthusiastic about helping prisoners break barriers to better equip themselves to successfully reintegrate into society as productive members of our society. Prisons have become more diverse, and we have people from diverse cultures and backgrounds with unique needs. One-size-fits-all prison reentry programs and rehabilitative centers will not suffice in this twenty-first-century world. We need to transform prison reintegration programs to give every prisoner the opportunity to successfully reintegrate into their communities. A college degree in Leadership and Organizational studies will help me to become an effective leader in my community and assist me to attempt to break down racial, ethnic, and religious barriers that often prevent successful reintegration into society.

Importantly, a degree in Leadership & Organizational Studies will open doors to a better future, restore my self-confidence, and give me a purpose to live and contribute more to my prison community. In addition, in my efforts to better myself during my incarceration, I have completed dozens of rehabilitative and vocational programs. My focus is not only on education but also on becoming a better person by seeking mental health counseling and completing life skills training programs. If I am fortunate to get parole, I will most probably be deported to India. I have an incredibly supportive family, a place to live and take care of not only myself but my

aged parents. I am sure that with the help, support, and mercy of God Almighty, I will be a productive member of my society irrespective of my physical location.

Completed the following courses:

- Houses of Healing
- Group on Loss & Grief Sponsored by Hospice
- Peer Educator (Coastal AIDS Network)
- Basic Reading Literacy Tutor Workshop (Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. [LVA])
- Horticulture Program I (the University of Maine at Orono)
- Challenge Program (Federally recognized program)
- Inside Out Dads (National Fatherhood Initiative)
- Petey Greene Tutoring Program
- CCAR Recovery Coach
- Vermicompost
- Master Gardener Volunteer Program (2022) (the University of Maine at Orono)
- Introduction to Beekeeping
- Financial Literacy and Money Management Skills
- Finished more than 115,000 hours of courses and certification programs on the Maine Department of Corrections EDOVO Tablet (three hundred-plus certificates, four hundred-plus courses, and two thousand-plus lessons completed)

Enrolled in the following courses:

- Writing in the Major (LOS299) (University of Southern Maine)
- Organizational Theory (LOS300) (University of Southern Maine)
- Master Food Preserver (University of Maine at Orono)

Volunteered for the following programs:

- Volunteer Prison Inter-Faith Committee
- Volunteer Peer Educator
- Volunteer Recovery Coach
- Volunteer Adult Literacy Educator
- Volunteer COVID pool testing team
- Volunteer garden worker
- Volunteer snow removal team

From: barbie0528@yahoo.com <barbie0528@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 7:28 AM

To: Praver, Samuel <Samuel.Praver@legislature.maine.gov>

Subject: Maine State Life without Parole testimony

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

I am a dear friend of Richard Stahursky who was sentenced to 9999 years for the murder of a Child molester in Maine state prison in Maine. Maine is currently Not allowing parole on any life sentences. Recently the American Bar Association has called for review of such cases and to abolish the no parole sentence. I have always been a believer of the justice system as well as the ability to rehabilitate offenders. when offenders are given life sentences with no parole they are given no hope. How can we expect them to become better humans when we are telling them they will never be free again? They are serving the rest of their life behind bars with no future, therefore, no desire to become better and be rehabilitated. I have known Richard for almost 25 years. 20 of those years he has been behind bars. Before prison Richard grew up in a violent world. He was the main protector of his mother and sister as well as any woman around him. Before prison Richard was kind, respectful, caring and always there whenever you needed him. I believe Richard could be this person again if given the chance and hope of one day being rehabilitated back into society. I am asking that you take my testimony into consideration when reviewing the life without parole sentence in Maine. Thank you to the members of the commission for allowing me to testify.

Hello,

I am writing to you as a volunteer with the Jericho Circle Project, which has recently begun working with men inside Maine State Prison. I would like to express my support for the reestablishment of parole in Maine. The healing work being done in Jericho Circle is a testament to the inmates' willingness to change.

If there is anything else I can do to show my support for the reestablishment of parole, please let me know. I was told I could at least send you this letter, as a start.

Thank you,

Paley Burlin

To the Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole

I write to you because I would like to declare my support for reestablishing parole in Maine. I have two reasons why I believe that parole should be reinstated in Maine.

My first reason comes from my experience with working with at-risk youth, some of whom are the children of jailed or incarcerated people. Put simply, it is unjust that the state of Maine punishes the children of the incarcerated with the absence of their parent or parents. When a parent is removed from a child's life, there is so much the child misses: getting told stories and being read to before bed; playing sports together; spending time in nature together; getting help with schoolwork; breaking bread at dinnertime; and all the other things that constitute family life. These are the important moments of growing up when children feel respected and heard. But the children of the incarcerated are bereaved of these formative experiences, and so, children develop without their parent's unconditional love. Even if the love is in the parent's heart, it is often lost in the void between the incarcerated parent and the free child. This is because a child psychologically cannot feel someone's love if they are not physically there. Consequently, the child will interpret their parent's incarceration as the parent's decision to leave them because they are supposedly not worth loving—no matter how far that is from the truth. Lawmakers can delineate the sky-high cost of incarcerating people, about \$74,000 per prisoner per year, but I doubt anyone can calculate the economic and spiritual cost to our society when the state traumatizes each child of the incarcerated. Here is an ethical concern every tax paying Mainer should consider, is it morally acceptable to dissolve families and make children into orphans by imprisoning their parents? Parents have been separated from their children for too long. It is time to reward transformed people with parole and reunite families.

The second reason parole should be reinstated in Maine is that incarcerated people are not given the opportunity to make amends to the community they harmed. To incarcerate someone is essentially to rend someone socially dead in much the same way slavery is a form of social death. The social death prisoners experience is a reflection of the historical emergence of incarceration as a more ethical alternative to capital punishment. Social and physical death further inflict pain upon society. The way to resolve social conflicts, or crime, is not to divide the community even further. Rather, the path to justice is walked by the whole community. The person who harmed society must be present in the community and follow a communally agreed upon harm repair agreement. People who are ready to make amends to society, who have shown their determination through good behavior and personal growth, should be given the opportunity to re-enter society and make concrete reparations to the society they have harmed. There are examples of restorative justice all over the country. Maine has its own restorative justice movement that is most likely the future of justice for our state.

Thank you for your time. I hope that when the committee makes a decision about parole, they consider the innocence of children and the powerful potential of allowing for people to right their own wrongs.

Sincerely,

Peter Cooke

Good morning! I am writing to express my support for the re-establishment of parole in Maine. As a student in the Carter School at George Mason University, I had the great privilege of working with both Leo Hylton and Brandon Brown. Working with them has transformed my view on redemption and people's ability to change when given the proper support. I believe the reinstatement of parole would be a great step forward for the justice system in Maine.

Thank you,
Rebecca Boyd

Parole is a social justice question that deserves serious consideration. My name is Ryan Hopkins, and I am on my 19th year of incarceration with approximately 19 more years remaining on my sentence. I spent the first ten years of my concurrent sentence in federal prison. There was not much available for programming while I was in federal custody. When I arrived in Maine eight years ago to continue my state sentence, I realized that there were many opportunities to change my life, which eventually evolved into supporting others who wished to change their lives as well.

Post-secondary education was the first opportunity that appealed to me at the Maine State Prison (MSP). I was amongst the first cohort to begin college under the Second Chance Pell-Grant in the fall of 2016. I received a bachelor's degree and was awarded Liberal Arts student of the year from the University of Maine at Augusta. Next month I will begin a master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. My focus is to promote the advancement of education and labor skills amongst incarcerated individuals to increase their likelihood of meaningful employment upon reentry and decrease the chances of recidivism. Upon release, I would like to utilize my degree to help immigrants integrate into the workforce, and to help promote cultural sensitivity amongst employers. Also, I am interested in community organization and wellness.

In addition to taking classes, I work as a liaison between the University of Maine at Augusta and MSP. My role also includes coaching where confidence is lacking, then following up with whatever tutoring is necessary. My spare time is spent volunteering as a recovery coach, training shelter dogs for adoption, collaborating on a restorative justice committee, and giving feedback on tools designed by Recidiviz to support data driven programs in Maine prisons. I am also designing a program that focuses on social bonds to prevent crime and promote wellness.

If parole were open to me, I would use the opportunity to continue promoting healthy and rehabilitative practices within my community. People are suffering outside these walls, and with my experiences and education, I believe I can help make our Maine communities safer against crime by steering those with addiction problems and/or criminal behavior toward healthier life practices. We need people in our communities who can reach out to those that feel hopeless and are on the margins of society. Collaboratively with Maine's probation officers, I hope to one day contribute toward supporting criminal prevention and rehabilitation. My greatest fear is that I become burnout in promoting rehabilitative change if I never see change in my own conditions. I know I can make a difference in our Maine communities if given the opportunity.

To Whom it may concern,

Wednesday October 12, 2022

I am writing in regard to Parole in Maine. I feel that there are many valid reasons why Maine should institute Parole. Felons can still contribute positively to the community. There are a few individuals who I feel absolutely deserve Parole based on their good behavior, high achievements, their positive impact on other women at Maine Correctional Center, their remorse for their crime, the courses they've taken, they have great work ethics, and overall they deserve a second chance.

Not everyone needs to spend their entire sentence in prison, and they could be a productive member of society, which in the long run helps the State of Maine *make* money instead of spending it on housing an inmate. Each decision should be made on a case-by-case scenario, but there are many deserving women that I know, and probably men too.

There are inmates here that have had years with zero disciplinary issues, and are respectful to others, including Correctional Staff. They could easily find and hold employment and would not be a problem to employers or society. Not all inmates are disrespectful. There are many good people to be found in prison.

There are a number of jobs at the Correctional Centers/Prisons around the state. While some have a high turn-over rate, most long timers hold a steady job for years. They contribute to and support whatever position they are employed in. They consistently arrive on time for work, they assist others, they train new workers, they will work extra hours at times to make any needed accommodations, they are respectful to their co-workers as well as Corrections staff and any Supervisors. Employers would be better off to have an assortment of new employees with all the job openings the state currently has. The cost to the state will decrease drastically as well, which is an added benefit.

Most are remorseful for their crimes and have made amends to the best of their ability. Losing everything and a major chunk of time, really makes a person re-evaluate themselves and how they found themselves in the situation to begin with. Many regret the choices they made and if given a 're-do' would make a better choice than what they had. They acknowledge their behavior and how they have worked through their issues to move forward and be better.

There are inmates who have earned trust with staff by stepping up to assist when needed, helping others, taking initiative, holding a job for a long period, and personal growth of an individual. Additionally, many have taken dozens of classes and worked with mental health and/or substance abuse counselors. They have made the changes necessary to function on the outside in a healthy environment. They have learned from their past mistakes and made the changes needed to succeed in life.

These inmates are not just a number. They are real people with real lives and real families that need them. If a person has 'paid their dues,' has accepted responsibility, is willing and able to work, and is a respectful and respected individual, then why not give them a second chance? Why not allow them to show society that we *are* redeemable? Why not help families heal and rebuild/repair relationships?

If a person has shown they have changed for the better, they are of better use to others by being allowed Parole. There *are* good people in prison, just waiting to prove themselves to the world, just waiting for their second chance. Doesn't everyone deserve to at least have the *opportunity* for a second chance?

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.



Sarah Conway

10/12/2022

Parole Study Commission - Public Comment 11.29.22

Submitted by Sarah Mattox - Restorative Justice Project Maine

39A Spring Street / Belfast, ME 04915

(207) 323-9295

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the importance of instating parole with a restorative justice component. My name is Sarah Mattox and I work with the Restorative Justice Project - Maine; I am also the RJP Maine representative to the Maine Restorative Justice Coalition, a statewide group of restorative practicing organizations, as well as co-chair of the statewide Juvenile Restorative Justice Council - a cross-sector group of restorative justice stakeholders which involves systems representatives from DOC, DOE and DHHS, community-based organizations working in mental health, new Mainer advocacy, victims services, RJ providers and others.

Bringing together persons harmed with those who caused harm, as well as members of the affected community, to discuss what happened who was affected and how and to collaboratively determine what can be done to make things as right as possible is a practice that is not only practical but keenly effective at responding to the needs of those harmed, engaging crucial support so that accountability is possible, and including the community in the process so that stigma and shame are reduced through the effort of making things as right as possible - and, importantly, attending how to prevent something similar from occurring in the future.

As a state investigator once commented at the close of participating in a process I facilitated: restorative justice offers a scalpel, whereas the legal process is a blunt instrument.

I have had the opportunity to facilitate conversations where a parent lost a child - and there was only one person in the world who had the answers to the questions of 'how did they die? What were their last moments like? Were they in pain?' There was the young fiance who, having lost her betrothed, needed to be able to say to the person responsible: 'I forgive you'. So too have I facilitated processes of burglary and robbery wherein those harmed urgently needed answers to their questions in order to alleviate haunting symptoms of PTSD. I recall vividly an elderly homeowner who hadn't been able to sleep for months following the home invasion. In another instance, it was the young mother who lived down the street from the site of the armed break-in who was unable to leave her home due to a pervasive fear that something would happen to her children... Restorative justice offers the opportunity to explore the context of what happened and to plan together how to move forward based on the needs of those most closely affected.

Within the MERJ Coalition, we envision a **continuum of opportunities** for individuals and communities to engage in community-facilitated restorative justice processes. As we all know, readiness to engage in healing does not happen on a clear and predictable time-table; thus, it is imperative for the well-being and safety of all citizens that there be restorative justice opportunities at every point - from citizen referrals to pre-charge to court-diversion to - importantly! - parole. I'd like to emphasize that RJ is especially important at this juncture, as both the affected persons and the individual who caused harm may be at a place of particular need to address each other in anticipation of inhabiting the same community once again.

The RJ-practicing community looks forward to continuing to build the necessary infrastructure to serve as facilitators for RJ processes as a voluntary component of the parole process. This will require funding, gaining clarity on how referrals might be made, establishing protocols regarding outreach to persons harmed, and so forth. We are confident that, in working together, we can

build a safer community where all citizens feel their dignity and safety needs are actively supported.

--

Sarah Mattox (she/ her)

Restorative Justice Project - Maine

Enterprise Support: Communications, Internal Data, Statewide Policy & Partnerships

(207) 323-9295

* Please note that my role is half-time, so it may be a couple of days before you hear back. If you need immediate assistance, please call the main office at (207) 338-2742. Thank you!

To whom it may concern,

My name is Savannah Smith I'm currently serving ten years at Maine Correctional Center. I have been incarcerated since April 4th, 2019. The crime I was charged with happened in October of 2017. Two weeks after my 20th birthday. In between these years, I stayed in the same town where my crime happened and tried to live a normal life. I haven't gotten in any trouble with the police, nor had I before this crime happened. I struggled with addiction to marijuana since late middle school and explored around in other hard drugs during the time of my crime.

When I was arrested in April 2019 I thought this was a chance to sit back and figure out why my life was going the way it was and to become a better member of society for when I get home. So that's what I've been doing. I have taken most of the classes available like Philosophy Of Love with the College of MIT, New Freedom, Grieving Loss of Children, Moving On (class on Domestic Violence) and lots more at MCC. As I did in Hancock County and Two Bridges Regional Jail like Anger Management, Introduction to College, Art, etc. I have also started college again, in 2016 I was attending Beal College for Medical Assisting while raising a year-old daughter by myself. Working, being a single mom, and going to school was a lot at once but I wanted to be something for my daughter other than a struggling single mother. I now attend Washington County Community College taking an Associate of Applied Science in Human Services/Certificate in Substance Use & Recovery. I will be expected to graduate from WCCC in 2024. After that, I plan to attend the University of Maine in Augusta for my bachelor's degree in Applied Science in Human Services.

I know for myself and other women incarcerated we could be doing a lot more if we were to have Parole in Maine. Helping our community by working and attending school and doing more for our families. My mother, brother, and baby sister have lived in Tennessee for over five years now. I saw my mother for the first time in person in over 5 years and got to meet my new baby sister in September of 2022. Which was my first contact visit since I've been incarcerated. Words couldn't explain the feeling of seeing your family, it gives us courage, strength, and most importantly the love that we need to continue to push on.

Giving Parole back to Maine would give inmates a chance to show the community the better person that they have become. It would give us a chance to give back to the community, work in the community so we can pay taxes, and it would let us have a stronger bond with our families. Times have come a long way and bringing Parole back could be the next big step to bringing both prison communities and outside communities together as one.

To whom it concerns,

I want to offer my unwavering support to reestablish parole in the state of Maine. As we know, there's too much data and personal testimonies that support the notion that when human beings act out against the law, with a reasonable amount of time, support, and various approaches to healing, they can and should be able to return home to their families to begin living again with the newly found tools they've developed along the way. Although it can be difficult discussing the idea of safety when referencing those who've broken the law, we also must acknowledge that the law was written to disregard certain aspects of the human experience and has created an immoral form of justice that has often formed unsafe environments for these same individuals. It's up to us to rethink the way we respond to those who've been impacted by these flawed systems and create safer environments by putting more recovery-based systems in place, such as parole. Keeping the same process in place within the criminal justice system "disincentivizes the growth and personal transformation, which ultimately leads to further harm and recidivism" and creates more opportunities for an unsafe community. If that's not enough, the most important impact of parole is that "when combined with restorative practices, the parole process can provide an avenue of support, empowerment, and healing for the victims and survivors most impacted".

Shayna Marlowe, M.A. She/Her

Assistant Director for Sexual and Interpersonal Violence- George Mason University

MS in Collaborative Community Action
Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution
George Mason University

To the Commission Chairs and Members of the Commission To Examine Reestablishing Parole,

My name is Stephanie Hynes and I currently live in Boston, MA but have grown up spending winters skiing in Maine and value all of my time and memories created there. **I am writing to you today to show my absolute support in re-establishing parole in Maine.** Our carceral system is in desperate need of repair and this is a great first step towards fixing it.

Thank you for considering my opinion, and I appreciate the work that you do.

Best,
Stephanie Hynes

63 Melcher Street
Boston, MA
02210

Who I am, and what I have been doing since incarcerated

My name is Steven and I offer you this written testimony for the Commission to Reestablish Parole in hope it helps with understanding I am more than worst choice I ever made, and we can redeem our lives. I have been incarcerated for the past 17 years. Over this time I have worked diligently at atoning for the choices that led me to prison, at understanding myself better, and understanding the choices that brought me here so I never repeat them. I take full responsibility for my actions and have worked to atone for them.

Since my incarceration I have focused on things that are good for me, attempted to resolve conflicts in my life, and have worked to remove unneeded stressors. I have dedicated the past 13 years into my educational pursuit of eventually earning a doctorate. I have completed my undergraduate degrees at the University of Maine Augusta earning an Associate's degree, a Bachelor degree in Liberal Arts, and a B.S. in Mental Health and Human Services. I earned two certifications from the University, one as a Substance Use Rehabilitation Technician and one as a certified Mental Health Rehabilitation Technician. In 2012, I got a job with the substance abuse department and have worked to introduce recovery coaching at the prison which we now have in every Facility Statewide.

I am currently a graduate student studying Positive Psychology at Life University. I am presently combining my education with my lived experience of incarceration to help create a change in the collective consciousness surrounding mass incarceration.

I have earned many certifications, have taken several classes, and have become very interested in holistic health. I am involved with yoga, meditation, and exploring healing modalities that will support marginalized populations. I serve on the board of the Maine State Prison Restorative Practices Steering Committee with several men and women who are instrumental in criminal justice reform. I am a certified recovery coach, have served with the Maine State Prison Hospice Council where I learned some of my greatest lessons about living.

It is not so much what I have earned but how I am sharing and applying it. Each day my goal is to help at least one person find their path and find some healing in their life. I do my best to give back to my community and honor my victim, his family, and my community here in prison.

I have also fallen in love with a beautiful woman since being in who challenges me every day to be a better man. I hope to be released and spend my life with her doing positive pro-social things for our community. I feel like my mind and heart are right today. I am a good person who did a bad thing under the influence of alcohol and drugs and under the influence of lots of trauma that I never dealt with. Today, after addressing my challenges that I dealt with, I see myself as a leader, as a friend, a son, a professional, and as someone who could give a lot to the world if I was released.

If Afforded Parole

If I was afforded the opportunity of parole, I would give back by helping others who are struggling with mental health and substance abuse. I hope to come into county jails and prisons from the outside to provide services using my education and lived experience. I would support my family, my mother in particular who is currently on disability. I would also work to help my victim's mother anyway that she saw fit and requested. My hope is to inspire others who are struggling find help and support. I also hope to create a non-profit organization with my future wife to help single mothers and incarcerated residents with college opportunities.

Time on paper

I currently have 21 years left on paper.

1. There is a wide prevalence of mental illness in prison population
2. "The American correctional system is America's largest mental hospital." This likely results from closing or defunding mental health settings (hospitals, clinics, etc.) and the use of prisons as dispositional short cut: "do something with this person." Many more mentally ill persons are imprisoned than we know.
3. This situation is independent of mental illness as, say, exculpatory insanity findings.
4. A relatively small fraction of crimes are committed by the mentally ill, although such events are often the focus of extensive, even hysterical news coverage, so that their prevalence is overestimated.
5. However, if a crime results from a mental illness, successful treatment of the illness significantly decreases recidivism and likelihood of reoffending. Parole may be appropriately considered for this group.
6. A smaller percentage of mental illnesses are not treatable; in addition, some mentally ill persons have forms of permanent brain damage that are unlikely to respond to any currently available treatment.
7. Thus, treatability and response to treatment serve as the main questions to address in a parole assessment.

*Thomas G. Gutheil, MD
Professor of Psychiatry
Harvard Medical School*

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I AM WRITING IN REGARD TO PAROLE IN THE STATE OF MAINE. THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE, GOOD LOYAL PEOPLE IN MAINE THAT WOULD AND COULD BENEFIT FROM PAROLE. I AM CURRENTLY INCARCERATED ON A 23-YEAR SENTENCE AND AM HERE WITH MANY THAT WOULD BE GREAT CANDIDATES FOR THIS PROGRAM. MOST HAVE LOST EVERYTHING BECAUSE OF THEIR INJUSTICE AND THE CRIME THEY HAVE COMMITTED. WE OFTEN FEEL LOST AND FOUND AND LOST ALL AT THE SAME TIME. MANY OF US LIVE WITH THE DEEPEST REMORSE THAT THERE COULD EVER BE. WE ARE HUMAN TOO AND WE HAVE REAL FEELINGS. FOR MANY OF US, THERE ARE JOBS THAT WE GET UP TO EVERY DAY AND LIVES THAT WE TRY TO CONTINUE TO LIVE INSIDE THIS RAZOR WIRE NOTHINGNESS. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS STILL HOPE BECAUSE ONCE YOU LOSE IT IT'S OVER. MANY OF US COULD AND CAN GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY IN MANY WAYS BY HELPING AT A HOMELESS SHELTER OR A SOUP KITCHEN. FOR EXAMPLE. THERE ARE ALSO MANY OF US THAT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE OUR EDUCATION AND ARE ENROLLED IN COLLEGE AND HAVE OUR BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREES. AND WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO BE ABLE TO PUT THOSE TO USE. MOST OF US KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE THOSE WE LOVE WHILE HERE ALSO IT LEAVES A HUGE HOLE IN OUR HEARTS AND WE ARE OFTEN NOT ABLE TO GO TO THE FUNERALS OR WAKES BECAUSE OF OUR CRIMES OR OUR INCARCERATION. THERE ARE ALSO PEOPLE HERE THAT DO NOT DESERVE TO BE HERE AS IT HAS BEEN THE CASE MANY TIMES IN THE PAST. PAROLE WOULD BE A GREAT ASSET FOR THE STATE BECAUSE IT WOULD FREE UP THE TAX DOLLARS THAT ARE PLACED ON THE POPULATION. AND IT WOULD GIVE THOSE INCARCERATED A CHANCE TO PROVE THOSE AGAINST US WRONG.

FW: Parole



Prawer, Samuel

Thu 9/8, 9:04 AM

Arthur Jones <foxtrot1@roadrunner.com>; Bickford, Bruce; Black, Anna; +15 more ▾

Reply all | ▾

Parole study

-----Original Message-----

From: Wendy Loker <wendyloker@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 9:22 PM

To: Prawer, Samuel <Samuel.Prawer@legislature.maine.gov>

Subject: Parole

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Please support the reinstatement of parole in the State of Maine. It will save the State money and allow prisoners a huge incentive to work towards that reward. Let's move towards rehabilitation not a life sentence on the taxpayers tab.



Reestablish Parole with Mental Health Provisions

The state of Maine is embarrassingly archaic, extremely unforgiving and many times the very cause of high numbers of incarceration, rather than the solution it claims to be for them. I am largely in favor of parole, but am here to shed light on an issue vastly overlooked and deeply intertwined within our prison system. Maine is one of the worst states in the union for recognizing and seeking justice for crimes committed because of mental health issues.

Innumerable nation wide studies, specifically over the last twenty years, have shown that an average of anywhere from 56-61% of state prisoners suffer from mental health problems (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs). These percentages do not even include federal penitentiaries or locally run jails. In the case of more severe charges, as might be more commonly discussed for parole, patients with severe mental disorders like schizophrenia comprise between 5% and 20% of all homicide offenders, and between 38%-61% of homicides that take place at the hands of individuals with mental or psychotic illness occur before treatment and before a diagnosis is ever made (National Center for Biotechnology Information). This means that the individual who committed the crime did not yet know that they were sick, many times before they stood trial, and were therefore unable to seek or receive preventative treatment. You can't get chemo if you don't know you have cancer. These individuals were mentally and physically unable to regulate or properly assess the actions leading to their offense. When our own brains work against us, our choices are not actually choices at all.

We live in a world where a mental disease like Alzheimer's is a sadness to be sympathized with. We spread awareness and raise money for research and for a cure while widely acknowledging that the demeanors and actions of those who suffer from it are not a reflection of their true self. We remember that actions do not always make the man. Why then are traumatic brain injuries and diseases like schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder, though often treatable to the point of remission and proven in many cases to pose no future threat of violence, seen as criminal? Are these all not physical or genetic disorders of the mind?

The proposal of serving half a sentence or twenty years before becoming eligible for parole is a long time to wait for someone who made a mistake or a terrible choice, but it's a sin for someone who didn't. Those with mental illness did not follow the same process of logic or passion as those who made a conscious decision to offend and therefore, should not have to wait in the same lines. Their rehabilitation and potential does not come from a shift in morality or perspective, but from therapy and medicine. A separate, clinically determined release system, such as those used at facilities like Riverview and the Maine State Prison Intensive Mental

Health Unit, should determine timelines and criteria for release. At the very least, the proposed timeline of half a sentence or twenty years should be cut in half, though that's still unjust and too long for inmates diagnosed with mental illness who are showing signs of recovery and remission since incarcerated. Especially those formally committed to mental health units or hospitals. Please recommend to show compassion for the individuals often publicly and wrongfully branded as vicious criminals who are working to understand their disease, and to better themselves for it. The individuals who should have never been arrested in the first place.

Pope Francis once told Congress that "a just and necessary punishment must never exclude the dimension of hope and the goal of rehabilitation." In Maine, we claim to be a department of corrections. With the systems we currently have in place, I ask that you consider whether or not we are an establishment that reflects that. I don't think so. But moving forward, we can be.

Sarah Elie