



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In support of LD 1756

An Act To Improve Public Safety through Coordinated Reentry of Prisoners into the Community

June 3, 2019

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in support of LD 1756, *An Act to Improve Public Safety through Coordinated Reentry of Prisoners into the Community*.

A major challenge in Maine and across the country is finding ways to promote successful reentry, with the goal of mitigating the trauma incurred by incarceration and putting incarcerated people in the best position possible to reenter society and have the supports they need to succeed. We consider investment into coordinated assistance with reentry and the receipt of supportive services and benefits upon release into the community to be an investment into public safety, our communities, and the success and dignity of our incarcerated residents and citizens.

Enhancing the supervised community confinement program, which is woefully underused, could be a sustainable solution to addressing the female incarceration boom in Maine, thereby alleviating pressure to move these incarcerated people to a new facility. Fewer incarcerated people means fewer beds, and it means less trauma to individuals, families, and communities. Lowering barriers to the program and including recovery houses and other transitional living spaces within the program is critical to adapting to the needs of incarcerated people and ensuring their successful reentry into their communities.

Promoting self-determination, minimizing trauma, and prioritizing successful reentry into society should always be our focus. LD 1756 gives us the tools needed to do this. We urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1756. Thank you for your time.