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Senator Carney and Representative Harnett and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jake Kulaw, I live in South Portland, and I am a teacher at Deering High School in Portland. I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN) as a person of faith, committed to our fundamental principle of justice, equity, and compassion in all human relations. We support the passage of LD 1617, An Act to Establish and Practice Restorative Justice.

Restorative practices range a continuum from the *proactive practice* of relationship and community-building --preventing harm from occurring and strengthening our collective capacity to hear one another, empathize, plan, celebrate and mourn, to the *responsive practices*, which could range from something as simple as an impromptu dialogue between two individuals to a more complex process requiring significant preparation and involving multiple stakeholders. The practice of reintegrating individuals (or groups) who have been disconnected from community is equally important to a community striving to embody restorative values, as ours should be.

In the last 20 years, a growing tide of citizen-led restorative justice organizations have been established in the state, showing the growing interest in utilizing this process:

- Portland Center for Restorative Justice
- Maine Youth Court
- Downeast Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice Institute of Maine
- Juvenile Community Reparations Board, Old Orchard Beach
- County Restorative Justice
- Penquis CAP
- Restorative Justice Project - Maine
- Maine Youth Justice
- Wabanaki REACH
- Scores of schools and school districts across the state; there is no current inventory of restorative practices in Maine schools

Restorative justice can also be helpful to victims of misconduct, as PTSD symptoms can be reduced by having an opportunity to have their questions answered and to speak to how they were impacted. This can increase the opportunity for restitution and making meaningful amends. The affected community is engaged in a way that promotes insight and empathy and can even spur organizing around gaps in resources and support for local citizens, thereby enhancing wellbeing and safety for the entire community.

These are only some of the potential benefits restorative justice offers us in addressing root causes of misbehavior and harm in such a way that the cycle of harm and isolation is redirected into an upward spiral of mutual support, connection and healing.

Kind regards,

Jake Kulaw