



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

June 21, 2021

The 130th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 130th Legislature:

By the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing L.D. 1668, *Resolve, To Develop a Plan to Close the Long Creek Youth Development Center and Redirect Funding to Community Integration Services for Adjudicated Youth.*

L.D. 1668 is fundamentally flawed because it forces the closure of the State's only secure confinement option for juvenile offenders before safe and appropriate alternatives will be available. If this bill were to become law, Maine would become the only state in the nation without a secure facility to serve the needs of youth who require detention for some period because they represent a risk to themselves or others in the course of their rehabilitation. Responsible juvenile justice reform also takes into account the needs of public safety. I object to this legislation for its failure to do so.

My Administration has demonstrated deep commitment to bringing necessary change to Maine's juvenile justice system. The Department of Corrections (DOC) has engaged with the 32-member Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force, and collaborated with experts at the Center of Children's Law and Policy and the Juvenile Justice Research and Reform Lab at Drexel University, to identify, develop, and implement a suite of systemic reforms. These include shifting \$6 million in DOC's juvenile budgetary resources to community based programs and services; opening two community-based residences, one for boys and one for girls, as transitional living options for youth returning home after a stay at the Long Creek Youth Development Center (Long Creek); and shifting funding for 14 vacant positions assigned to Long Creek to programs that promote restorative justice, deliver therapy and other wrap-around services, and establish youth advocacy and mentorship programs. DOC has also reworked training curricula and certification standards to provide new focus on adolescent brain development, adolescent trauma, mental health and substance abuse counseling, suicide prevention, and cultural competency, with particular attention to youth of color and LGBTQIA youth.



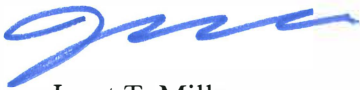
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These initiatives have already shown real results. DOC's expansion of community-based programs and services statewide has undoubtedly prevented numerous at-risk youth from entering the system. And the judges of the Maine District Court, with DOC's active support, are using commitment to Long Creek only sparingly. There are currently only 31 youth detained in that facility, while hundreds of others are on informal adjustment, probation, or otherwise under court-ordered supervision either before or after adjudication, for whom that supervision is made meaningful because of the existence of Long Creek. If Long Creek did not exist for those who failed to take the conditions of their release seriously, there would be little incentive to do so.

L.D. 1668 represents a simplistic solution to a complex issue. A more thoughtful and balanced approach is set forth in L.D. 546, *An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force*. L.D. 546, in contrast, takes a constructive approach to holding DOC accountable for the most effective use of the \$6 million in resources the agency has reallocated to community-based programs, enhancing the effectiveness of proven child-serving support systems.

For these reasons, I return L.D. 1668 unsigned and vetoed, and I urge the Legislature to sustain this veto.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills
Governor



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