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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Maine Department of Corrections Sees Early Success with Transitional Living Residence**

In August the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) opened the Leading the Way Transitional Living Residence on Hogan Road in Bangor. The community-based transitional residence allows correctionally involved men a safe, structured, living program designed around engagement with needed supports and services, including behavioral health, independent living skills, and other targeted intervention services to help individuals rebuild following justice involvement.

Currently, 6 men live at the residence, which has capacity for 12 clients this fall, and more later this winter. All residents are able to stay rent free for up to 6 months. Applications to live in this dormitory style home come from residents of MDOC facilities who are transitioning to the department's Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP), which allows qualified residents to finish their sentence while living in the community. MDOC's probation clients as well as community-based individuals deferred through criminal justice programs like drug court may also apply.

Partnerships between local community behavioral health providers have been developed, as have relationships with local employers. All residents are either employed and/or completing intervention programming and participating with in-person and virtual life skills instruction while engaging with the robust recovery network in the Bangor area. The MDOC is enthusiastic about this early success of the program.

"This environment was the missing piece in our work with clients who need a normalized home environment in order to tackle what brought them into the justice system," says Jodie Johnson, the Regional Correctional Manager overseeing the Leading the Way Transitional Living Residence. Johnson explained that while the program encourages clients to be self-driven in pursuit of their goals and case planning, staff are there for support. "For many people, what we're asking isn't easy: learned skills like holding down a job, staying healthy, saving money, engaging appropriately with loved ones, and looking for long term housing. But these things are doable, and staff is here to help the men get through this part of their lives. We want each client to succeed."

Leading the Way Transitional Living Residence is an important part of Maine DOC's commitment to setting a new trend in corrections, one that ensures residents and clients see fewer barriers as they meaningfully engage rehabilitation focused services. Central to this mission is creating an atmosphere for

growth. “Clients don’t need more stigma, they don’t need more hoops,” says Deputy Commissioner Ryan Thornell. “So we designed this residence to feel like a home, normalizing the environment, to be conducive to supporting life changes.”

In the coming months Johnson and her team will focus on building connections with landlords and housing organizations across the state. She recognizes the importance of helping landlords see the benefit of renting to her clients when they are ready to transition out of the residence. By building relationships and sharing program details about the clients’ efforts toward rehabilitation she hopes to breakdown the stigma associated with renting to correctionally involved populations. “Stable housing helps keep people out of the system,” says Johnson.

The Maine Department of Corrections serves approximately 1,625 people through six adult facilities and one juvenile facility.

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