

January 17th, 2018

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services
From: Seth Blais
Re: LD 1711

My name is Seth Blais and I am here to show my support for LD 1711, which resolves to save lives by establishing a homeless opioid users service engagement pilot program within the Department of Health and Human Services.

I live in Portland and where I work as the sales director for a marketing agency and took time off from work to be here today. I'm here as an unpaid volunteer for Young People in Recovery. I also volunteer as a recovery coach for several local police departments, and I serve on the Board of Directors for a non-profit residential treatment program here in Maine.

I am also here today as a person in recovery from a substance use disorder, explicitly speaking I was an IV heroin user for many years--before I was able to find sustained sobriety and recovery. With that I want to emphasize that recovery is possible--treatment does work--and everyone deserves the opportunity to recover.

LD 1711 will provide two things that were very important in my recovery. Safe housing and medication-assisted treatment.

Medication-assisted treatment is part of my story. It was not a silver bullet fix for me, but it was part of my journey towards sustainable sobriety. It afforded me the opportunity gain space from the daily chaos of chasing heroin and kept me connected with medical professionals who cared about my recovery progress.

I also personally lived in a structured sober house in Portland where for the first time in more than a decade I was living in a safe environment where I was held accountable for my actions. It was in that controlled housing environment where I was able to find long-term recovery.

Both medication-assisted treatment and recovery-focused housing were part of my path to recovery and sobriety from drugs and alcohol. Without the resources and opportunities that I had available, I do not doubt that I would not be standing here in front of you today.

Overdose is also a part of my story, and I'm confident that without finding recovery when I did, I would have soon died from my disease.

Again, I want to emphasize that recovery is possible--treatment does work--and everyone deserves the opportunity to recover, especially those homeless Mainers who are potentially the most vulnerable and unstable people suffering from substance use disorders.