

Senator Ned Claxton, Representative Michele Meyer and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Patty Kidder and I live in the village of Springvale located in the city of Sanford. I am writing to you as a person of faith, to speak to you in favor of LD 1909 - An Act To Remove Restrictions on Syringe Service Programs.

As a Unitarian Universalist, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and in Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We need to increase access to clean syringes with no questions asked! We know that free access to clean syringes reduces the number of life-threatening infections spreading through our neighborhoods.

If those life-threatening infections go untreated they can cause liver or kidney failure which is a very painful way to die when you aren't even considered for an organ transplant. This puts even more stress on our Maine hospitals who are already strained due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know that clean needles save lives and reduce the instances of life-threatening blood infections needing extensive, expensive treatment. Studies have also shown that free and easy access to clean syringes reduces the number of dirty needles disposed in an unsafe manner. When we limit how many clean syringes we give a person suffering with substance use disorder, we are setting them up to possibly having to re-use a needle or share it with a friend and to dispose it inappropriately in a public place putting all of us at risk.

I look forward to a time when society stops treating people who suffer from substance use disorder as criminals and we give them the love and understanding necessary for them to seek treatment and recovery. For many, access to treatment information is found at the Syringe Service Program sites and the clean syringes keep them safe until they are ready to take the long road to recovery.

MUUSAN, the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, representing U.U. (Unitarian Universalist) churches all over Maine, supports passage of LD 1909 and we feel this legislation is necessary to save lives and protect public health.

I agree with the judgment of the Legislature that these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and LD 1909 - An Act To Remove Restrictions on Syringe Service Programs, as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety. As a long-time member of the Sanford Unitarian Universalist Church and MUUSAN, I hope you will all vote, Ought to Pass. Thank you for your time.

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