

Catherine Besteman
Portland
LD 1159

Dear Esteemed Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I write to support LD 1159. Nationwide, we are shifting from an approach to drug use that is based in punishment to one based in harm reduction. A punitive approach only causes more harm, more suffering, more vulnerability, and a negatively impactful cycle of taxpayer dollars spent on things that do not work, like incarceration. We need this bill in Maine because we need to pivot toward an approach to drug use that saves lives. This bill will help to get us there by authorizing the creation of a 2-year pilot project to establish and operate a harm reduction health center, approved by the local community where the center will be located. The bill protects the State from liability and tracks the effectiveness of the program, an important protocol that will provide empirical evidence about the wisdom of shifting to a new approach. We already have empirical evidence about the failure of the old approach (using incarceration and policing to stop drug use). The harm reduction health center approach has been successful in Rhode Island and we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by trying it here in Maine as well. I urge you to vote yes on LD 1159.

Sincerely
Catherine Besteman