

Jill Vaughn
South Portland
LD 1159

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today. My name is Jill Vaughn, I am a resident of South Portland, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD1159. I am a Nurse Practitioner, Assistant Professor of Nursing at Husson University, and on the Board of Directors for the American Nurses Association of Maine. But today, I speak as an individual, as a recovery ally, and as a patient advocate. I also speak from personal experience. I have walked through the pain of burying one of my brothers from a fentanyl overdose, and I have experienced the health triumphs that came to two of my siblings through the services like the ones outlined in LD 1159. LD: 1159 is a policy that meets the needs and challenges of our current opioid epidemic. We need to embrace people who need help, when and where they need help while providing the best evidence-based care as we do for diabetes and heart disease. Harm reduction is not a novel concept. In fact, harm reduction is well researched and shows that these services decrease overdose fatalities, acute life-threatening infections related to unsterile drug injection, and chronic diseases such as HIV/HCV. The model of harm reduction outlined in LD 1159 reminds me of my clinical experience working as a cardiac nurse practitioner in the coronary care unit. Patients would come in with heart attacks, heart failure, and peripheral arterial disease. While in the hospital we would arrange for cardiac rehab. Why? Because behavior modification, disease education, and treatment can't just happen in hospitals. This takes time and it takes a team of people including but not limited to physicians, nurses, social workers, recovery coaches, and community members. Substance use disorder is no different- it takes a team. Just like we meet cardiovascular patients where they are at with their diet, their exercise, and their smoking, we need to do the same for substance use. This is a disease, a disease that is killing more and more Mainers each year. LD 1159 recognizes the severity of the opioid epidemic and the need for partnership and innovation in health policy. LD 1159 encompasses proven and evidence-based treatments and puts them into policy and practice.

Thank you for your time,
Jill Vaughn RN, MSN, ACNP-BC