



# Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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April 10, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Baldacci  
Chair  
Joint Committee on Health and Human Services  
Cross Building, Room 209  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

The Honorable Michele Mayer  
Chair  
Joint Committee on Health and Human Services  
Cross Building, Room 209  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re: NNESAM's Support for LD 1159, An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers**

Dear Chair Baldacci and Chair Mayer,

On behalf of the Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine (NNESAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont who specialize in the prevention, treatment, and recovery from addiction, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. **We write today to express our support for LD 1159.** This bipartisan legislation would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to create a 2-year pilot program to establish and operate harm reduction health centers, subject to municipal approval. Also known as overdose prevention sites (OPS) or supervised injection facilities (SIF), these facilities provide a place where adults may use pre-obtained substances under the supervision of staff trained to prevent and treat overdose, prevent deaths and reduce harms from drug use (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B and C, and skin infections), as well as provide linkages to treatment and/or other services, and reduce public disorder.

In 2022, over 700 Mainers lost their lives due to drug overdose.<sup>i</sup> To mitigate these substantial harms to individuals and communities, lawmakers must pursue every policy tool at their disposal, including establishing pilot OPS. Leading public health and medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), have recognized the growing body of evidence that supports the establishment of OPS and their potential to reduce fatal overdose death. As such, both organizations have adopted policy positions calling for the development of pilot programs establishing OPS in the United States.<sup>ii iii</sup>

In 2021, Rhode Island became the first state in the nation to authorize a two-year pilot program certifying OPS.<sup>iv</sup> Later that year, the nation's first operating OPS were opened in New York City's Harlem and Washington Heights neighborhoods. In one year since opening, these sites have generated encouraging results. Staff members have intervened to

prevent over 600 overdoses and the number of discarded syringes was reduced in surrounding areas.<sup>v vi</sup>

The establishment of OPS is an evidence-based policy proven to save lives and reduce the negative public health outcomes associated with drug use. Maine can be on the cutting edge in pursuing this important policy solution. **As such, we urge members of this committee to favorably report LD 1159 and support its advancement forward.** Please do not hesitate to contact me at [molly.e.rossignol@gmail.com](mailto:molly.e.rossignol@gmail.com) or (603) 703-6253 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Molly E. Rossignol, DO, FASAM  
President, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

CC: The Honorable Henry Ingwersen  
The Honorable Marianne Moore  
The Honorable Margaret Craven  
The Honorable Ann Fredericks  
The Honorable Anne Graham  
The Honorable Abigail Griffin  
The Honorable Kathy Javner  
The Honorable Michael Lemelin  
The Honorable Colleen Madigan  
The Honorable Daniel Shagoury  
The Honorable Sam Zager

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<sup>i</sup> Sorg, M. H., Soucier, D. S., & Leidenfrost, A. (2022). Maine Monthly Overdose Report for December 2022. Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center. [https://mainedrugdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-12-ME\\_Monthly\\_OD\\_Report\\_final.pdf](https://mainedrugdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-12-ME_Monthly_OD_Report_final.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> American Medical Association. (2017). Pilot Implementation of Supervised Injection Facilities H-95.925. AMA. <https://policysearch.ama-assn.org/policyfinder/detail/supervised%20injection?uri=%2FAMADoc%2FHOD.xml-H-95.925.xml>

<sup>iii</sup> American Society of Addiction Medicine. (2021). Overdose Prevention Sites. asam.org. <https://www.asam.org/advocacy/public-policy-statements/details/public-policy-statements/2021/08/09/overdose-prevention-sites>

<sup>iv</sup> AP News. (2021). Governor signs law creating drug injection site program. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/ma-state-wire-government-and-politics-health-89cc2338c855a35c58bfc31c14d38031>

<sup>v</sup> Krauth, D. (2022). 7 on your side: 1 year later, NYC's Overdose Prevention Centers have save hundreds of lives. ABC7 New York. <https://abc7ny.com/7-on-your-side-investigates-nyc-overdose-prevention-center-drug-addiction/12511336/>

<sup>vi</sup> CBS Mornings. (2022). Inside overdose prevention centers designed to reduce harm from illicit drug use. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YUKwJIXPg4>.