

April 10th, 2023

Esteemed members of the HHS committee,

My name is Rosie Boyce, i'm an organizer with the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project and a resident of Lewiston, ME. I am here today to ask you to support LD 1159. I am a woman in Long term recovery, having been free of all illicit substances since Sept 23rd, 2008.

But I am not here to talk about my recovery today, I am here to tell you about my addiction to intravenous substances and how I survived years of IV polysubstance use. For the last few years of my active addiction, I was fortunate enough to have safe consumption supplies through the Portland needle exchange, but my substance use stems back to the times before needle exchanges and buying syringes over the counter were legal. I would love to be able to tell you that I am here today because of some miraculous treatment providers and a rock solid support system, which of course do play a huge role in my over all recovery story, but the truth has and always be that I am here today because I had a place to use substances where other people were well equipped to respond in the event of an overdose.

I was living in rural oxford county at the height of my using, and that is where i hit my rock bottom as well. The thing about active addiction that i am sure you will hear many times over, is that our using communities wind up becoming a defacto family for many of us, Due to the fact that I was in rural Maine during the exsten of my time using, there were certain homes that we congregated to to get the substance, find clean supplies and then use them. When I look back on those days, it feels absurd to call it a "safe" place because by definition, there was nothing safe about it. But it was the safest thing that we had access to at the time. There was a group of approx 20 people that frequented this space until we no longer had access to it. As times changed, people were arrested, and the friend group that had sustained me and my former husband were disbanded.

As the years passed, some of us found our way into recovery, and by some, I mean 6 of us. Out of those 6, 5 of us are still living. The remainder of that group are all either dead or serving life sentances in the feds...most are dead though. It's heart breaking to hear the stories of friends i once held dear to my heart, being left alone to die in the years prior to the good samaritan laws being passed in maine.

Billy was pushed out of a vehicle and left alone to die in a parking garage.

Carie was left outside of an obgyn's office but died before anyone knew she was outside.

Pam overdosed in her car and her husband mike oer dosed alone in their apartment less than a year later.

Pete was left alone in a hotel bathtub for the cleaning staff to find.

Josh died in the backseat of a vehicle on I-95 too far away from any medical services to be saved.

And Tom was found in his truck at poland spring, it was winter so the heater was still on. Our friend willie was the one that found him, after realizing that he had never returned from break. His eyes were open, and tears streaked his face.

Last, is an overdose that occurred in 2021, not one of my friend, but a child that i met doing street outreach. He was a homeless youth in Lewiston, just looking for a place to fit in, looking for a family to cal his own. His name was Xavier Berry. He died alone in an abandoned

apartment building in Lewiston a few days after he turned 18. I think about xavier everyday and how senseless his death was. How preventable his death was.

These people had families, children, friends, and they are but a small fraction of those that have died from completely preventable deaths.

Before this committee is more than a bill to be passed, this is an opportunity to change the direction of the overdose crisis this state has faced for several years. This bill is an opportunity to do what others have been too afraid to try. LD 1159 is more than a pilot program, it is a chance to start righting the wrongs that have plagued our system for so many years.

I will close with a statement and an ask.

The statement: This is a 2 year pilot program that has the potential to eliminate overdose deaths in Maine. If it appears that it isn't working at the end of the 2 years, than no arm no foul, but what we're currently doing just isn't working.

And now for The ask: what have we got to lose?

I urge this committee to vote to pass LD 1159, please be the first to say yes to Harm reduction health centers in Maine because dead people **can't recover**.

Thank you.