

Testimony of Doug Dunbar from Hermon, Maine

In Support of LD 1159

An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers

Public Hearing: April 10, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Doug Dunbar. I live in Hermon, part of Senator Baldacci's district, and I am writing to encourage your serious consideration of LD 1159. Too many people are dying from a preventable cause. This bill seeks to bring about urgently needed change.

Representative Laurie Osher of Orono deserves considerable credit and appreciation for sponsoring this vitally important piece of legislation. Thanks also to the bill's cosponsors. Everyone involved in developing LD 1159 are deeply troubled by the status quo. They recognize our current ways are resulting in unprecedented numbers of overdoses and deaths.

If you don't know someone who has died of an overdose, you are increasingly rare. Give it time. Sadly, it will happen. Soon, each of us will be touched by overdose and death.

We can decide the status quo is acceptable or we can think and act in new ways. Sometimes those new ways are uncomfortable, even scary, until we closely examine them. Harm reduction health centers might be one of them for you. It was for me, until I took a closer look.

During the past 25 years, over 1 million people have died of an overdose in the U.S. and Canada. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. In more than 35 years of operations around the world, there has never been an overdose death at a harm reduction health center.

We need understand how these centers can play an essential role in not only saving lives, but connecting individuals with needed information, services and resources. That is the new way of thinking. Help people to stay alive and provide needed care. Our brothers and sisters cannot get better once they are dead.

LD 1159 provides ample protections to the state and individuals. It invites us to take modest steps toward a proven way to save lives and help people. Being a leader sometimes requires the willingness to think differently and exercise a bit of courage. If this is one of those moments for you, be a leader and support LD 1159.

Thanks for your time and consideration. You have ample sources demonstrating the beneficial impacts of harm reduction health centers, but I would be happy to provide additional information if you contact me (dougddunbar@yahoo.com or 207-299-5626).