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55 Portland Street

Portland, ME 04101

207.775.0026

info@preblestreet.org



United Way  
of Southern Maine



Hello Chair Baldacci, Chair Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Taylor Cray, and I am the Outreach Team Leader for Preble Street's Advocacy Team. I am writing to you today to ask that you support LD1159: An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers.

At Preble Street, substance use and its associated dangers are a daily element of our work. Within our community, we experience the tragedy of overdose deaths on a regular basis as friends, family members, and peers are lost to substances. Harm reduction is an integral part of the work we do and is built into our internal procedures and is also part of our facility designs. Even outside of the direct community of social services providers and clients, it becomes increasingly difficult to find anyone in Maine who has not been impacted in some way by this ever-growing crisis. For those living and working on the front lines of the opioid crisis, the trauma and fear of loss perpetuates our relationships, work, and lives in ways that cannot be ignored.

Harm Reduction Health Centers provide individuals a safe and monitored environment in which to use drugs. In recent years, the available drug supply has become increasingly unsafe, as substances are cut with Fentanyl and other drugs that are more potent and difficult to predict. For many individuals, unpredictable changes to their drug supply can lead to fatal overdoses, particularly when there is no one present to intervene and administer naloxone, or when the drug is Narcan-resistant. Harm Reduction Centers ensure that individuals who use drugs can do so without risking their lives, despite potential unknown elements in their drug supply.

Much of our drug policy response in this country is rooted in fear and ignorance. For many years, our policy approaches have sought to address substance use through punishment, incarceration, and misinformation. In most cases, these approaches only continue to perpetuate the harmful cycles that damage not only individuals, but families, communities, and our society. The lack of compassion in our approach to drug policy has cost us too many lives, and we cannot continue to allow fear to dictate our response to this crisis. As many advocates will tell you all, no one has ever died in a Harm Reduction Health Center. This alone should be proof enough that these facilities are worth piloting in our state. The passage of LD1159 has the potential to save countless lives across the State of Maine. I urge you to vote in favor of this monumental bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Taylor Cray  
Advocacy Outreach Team Leader  
Preble Street

