



MAINE CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

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Statement of Opposition to L.D. 1364, An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption Sites April 27, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the distinguished Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Charles Rumsey. I am the Chief of the Cumberland Police Department, and President of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association in opposition to LD 1364.

The Mission of the Maine Chiefs of Police is to secure a closer official and personal relationship among Maine Police Officials; to secure a unity of action in law enforcement matters; to enhance the standards of police personnel, police training and police professionalism generally; to devise ways and means for equality of law enforcement throughout the state of Maine; to advance the prevention and detection of crime; to prescribe to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics; and to promote the profession of law enforcement as an integral and dedicated force in today's society sworn to the protection of life and property.

According to the bill summary,

This bill authorizes municipalities to approve safe consumption sites for individuals to self-administer previously obtained drugs. The bill requires the sites to satisfy certain requirements, including providing hygienic facilities, providing safe disposal of hypodermic apparatuses, providing naloxone hydrochloride as needed and making referrals to medical and social services. The bill provides immunity from arrest or prosecution for clients and staff members acting in accordance with the provisions of the bill. The bill requires municipalities that approve safe consumption sites to participate in a peer-reviewed study and requires the Department of Health and Human Services to submit reports related to the studies to the Legislature and the Governor's office.

The Maine Chiefs are in opposition to this bill and others like it this session because we are sworn to protect lives, and we have not seen enough data to show that harm reduction centers protect lives. We do have concern, however, that establishment of these sites would lead to an increase in drug dealing and other criminal activity associated with addition to illicit drugs near the sites. As you know, criminal activity that individuals engage in to support their habits can include property crimes such as theft and vehicle burglary, as well as violent crimes such as robbery and human trafficking.

Maine has a crisis with illicit drugs. We have set records in overdose deaths for three straight years and, in 2022, we lost 716 people. Each of these people had dynamic lives and left behind loved ones. Their lives were cut short, and we believe that our community is worse off for it. We have and want to be supportive of every single initiative that might save just one of those lives. Like we know - because the data confirms it - that more lives are saved when Narcan is accessible, so we have been supportive of those initiatives at the Legislature.

We are in support of legislation that help people to stop using drugs that can wreak havoc on their own lives, their family's lives and the community. We wholeheartedly support efforts to establish detox centers, including centers that will accept patients who present while under the influence of drugs. But we have not seen enough evidence that harm reduction centers assist people to stop using illicit drugs. Rather, we are concerned that these centers enable continued use, and potentially even "normalize" the use of these substances.

For these reasons, we would ask you to oppose LD 1364 and vote ought not to pass on this bill. On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, we want to thank the committee members for your work on this Committee.