

To the Health and Human Services Committee,

Regarding LD1975, the bill has many flaws, that ignore the reality of the situation that is facing the homeless community, specifically those who are suffering from drug addiction or what is referred to as Substance Use Disorder. Many individuals who have recovered from these addictions have testified in the past, that being in jail saved their life. Enforced rehab, and ensuring these individuals have mind chemically and physically capable of healing and making responsible choices is the very first step on the road to recovery. Making it easier for these individuals to remain in a chemical imbalance is only going to make the situation worse, as such decriminalizing the possession and use of dangerous substances is only going to increase the number of deaths, overdoses, as well as the further destruction of their lives. Health complications increase with additional drug use, and spending longer amounts of time in dangerous unhealthy environments such as unlicensed encampments that lack basic sanitation elements causes further damage to mind and body. Providing housing with no barrier to entry simply allows their substance abuse to continue hidden from public view. Is it truly better that these individuals die in a free apartment, rather than in a tent on the side of the road? Preventing further death must be the goal. Decriminalization may make it easier for these individuals to obtain gainful employment in the future, however you are unable to seek any employment if you have overdosed. Rather than decriminalization, creating a manner to expunge drug convictions from their record after a reasonable period of management over their addiction is the humane way to ensure that additional drug abuse is hindered and prevented, rather than allowed to persist by removing enforcement mechanisms.

I ask that you reject LD1975, and consider only responsible proposals which support and/or bolster current prohibition of dangerous drugs, as well as support or improve enforcement, empower our police to enforce the laws designed to protect these individuals from themselves, and call for accountability from our justice system and incarceration systems to get these people the help and health assistance they need.

Matthew Cochrane  
South Portland  
LD 1975

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