



Grandmothers For Reproductive Rights

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January 17, 2024

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am Cait Vaughan, Interim Executive Director at Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!), testifying on behalf of my organization in support of **LD 1975**, *An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs*. GRR! works intergenerationally through the lens of reproductive justice to assure sexual and reproductive rights for present and future generations. We have a particular stake in the intersections of pregnancy, parenting, criminalization and substance use. After decades of criminalization as the primary tool to address substance use, we collectively face skyrocketing numbers of drug overdose deaths; increasing prison and jail populations, particularly among women; thousands of Mainers without proper access to treatment; and a drug supply more poisonous than ever. If criminalizing drug users worked to solve problems, rather than creating a domino effect of new problems, we would live in a very different reality.

Maine has some of the most punishing thresholds for drug possession in the country, subjecting many to felony-level charges intended to ensnare major traffickers. This sentencing framework hobbles the ability of many women to acquire and retain meaningful employment and stable housing, which can make it nearly impossible to leave unsafe relationships, trapping them in cycles of abuse and recurring use. Many of our members served their careers in social service agencies, healthcare organizations and schools—where they witnessed firsthand how punishing addiction harmed entire families and communities. The American Medical Association (AMA) states, “drug addiction is a disease amenable to treatment rather than a criminal activity”. Similarly, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) states, “The use of the legal system to address perinatal alcohol and substance abuse is inappropriate”. Too many Mainers cannot access proper treatment or housing supports, when they want do seek help; thus, why increasing funding to critical supports for treatment, recovery and housing through passing LD 1975 is so necessary. We agree that resources and compassion—not punishment—will turn around Maine’s sad trends of overdose death, family separation and incarceration.

LD 1975 is a critical next step in shifting Maine’s paradigm toward resourcing individuals and their families, by focusing precious funding and other resources on what truly helps our communities to thrive. **We urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 1975.**

Respectfully,

Cait Vaughan, Interim Executive Director

Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!) works, through education and advocacy, to secure access to sexual & reproductive health, rights & justice for present & future generations.