

Roxanne Kai  
Woodstock  
LD 1975

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, My name is Roxy Kai from Woodstock, Maine. I am a volunteer leader with Maine People's Alliance and I am testifying in support of LD1975.

My dad had an enlarged aorta and a substance use disorder. He blew his heart and passed when I was 10. I'm now 31. As a child losing her dad to substance use complications leading to his heart giving out, I had a very strange relationship to my understanding of drug use. I was angry at him, how could he do that to me? I was wishing he had medical help and resources, I was mad at the doctors who warned him about his heart but didn't help him. I was mad at myself because the last time I saw him I didn't want to hug him because I was mad at him. I was mad at the world and mad at everything. And I'm still mad: because even though 21 years later we have made positive progress in how we view and treat and care for those struggling with substance use disorders; we are not where we need to be. Why?

Time and time again I and countless others have poured our hearts out to the state begging for these chances to save our family and friends. We have written testimony, provided evidence of practice that have shown positive results, we have cried, we have said the names of our loved ones to try to get you to see these are real people and not just numbers; Tim Jewell was my dad, not just a statistic!

LD1975 is needed. We need a health based approach. We need better access to public health services. We need programs that help people not punish them. So that way today's kids don't lose their dads too.