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LD 59, An Act to Ban the Drug Tianeptine

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety committee.

My Name is Kevin Joyce and I am the Sheriff of Cumberland County. I am here in support of LD 59, An Act to Ban the Drug, Tianeptine.

Tianeptine is a drug that has been prescribed to treat depression in various countries for a number of years. In the United States, tianeptine is fairly new to the drug scene. Known as gas station heroin, it is illegal to market or sell as a drug, but is not on a list of federally controlled substances. U.S. poison control centers have reported an increase in cases involving tianeptine, and tianeptine continues to pose a threat of overdoses and dependency risks for the population.

In Maine, tianeptine is being sold at gas stations and other convenience stores, as well as being available to buy online. It is available in the U.S., despite lack of FDA approval demonstrating the substance ability to enhance users' mood and cognitive function. In some instances, the product has been known to contain synthetic cannabinoids.

Even more concerning is that this drug is being sold at gas stations and convenience stores where motorists often stop to get items for consumption while driving. At a time whereby, law enforcement is seeing an increase in impaired driving, it is very concerning that this highly addictive drug is freely accessible by virtue of stopping by your local gas station.

A growing number of states have now banned tianeptine, most recently, Florida. Maine needs to follow suit to keep our neighbors safe and our roads safer.

Thank you and I hope that you will support LD 59, An Act to Ban the Drug Tianeptine.

Kevin Joyce, Sheriff
Cumberland County

