

Dear members of the Legislature,

Please accept my support of LD 689 on behalf of the Maine chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

A robust, well-staffed, expert poison center program is vital to public health and the practice of emergency medicine. Often, it is the expert input from toxicologists and their designees that helps emergency physicians manage complex poisonings as well as prevent unnecessary emergency department visits for minor cases.

While the service of the Northern New England Poison Center remains robust, we know that their resources have been stretched over the years as demand for services increases but funding has remained flat.

Here are a few key facts related to NNPC operations:

- No increase in Maine funding for over 20 years, less funding than 25 years ago
- Increased severity and complexity over the last two decades (23% increase from last year and sixth year of notably elevated numbers of serious cases):
 - Requiring higher education and training levels of staff (entirely nurses and pharmacists with physician consultation 24 x 7)
 - Requiring a 164% increase in cases requiring consultation with boarded toxicologists over the last 25 years
 - Requiring more follow up calls for further consultation (14,000 cases requiring an additional 18,000 follow up calls per year)
- Increase cost of healthcare professional staff (shortages of nurses making this worse)
- Increasing self-harm attempts in teens, those 20 – 29 years and older adults (more serious cases requiring more intervention)
- Increase of severity of calls over the last 5 years: life-threatening or fatal poisonings increased from 142/year before 2019 to 233/year in 2024 (a 64% increase)
- Increase in complexity of cases over the last 10 years: the number of patients taking 5 or more substances in a single overdose increased 34% (those taking 8 substances increased 108%; those taking ≥ 9 substances increased 44%)

- Increase in calls from healthcare facilities over the last 20 years: 20% years)
- Need for assistance with antidote procurement, and assistance with alternative antidotes, during times of shortage and lack of availability.

Thank you for your support of this common-sense legislation.

Sincerely,

Sheldon H. Stevenson, DO, FACEP
President, Maine Chapter
American College of Emergency Physicians