

Cynthia Cushing
Readfield
LD 219

My name is Cynthia Cushing and I am a concerned citizen of Maine. I would like to express my strong opposition to LD 219, a bill that proposes to restrict the number of syringes distributed by Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) in Maine. This legislation is fundamentally flawed, contradicts established public health principles, and will ultimately harm the health and safety of our communities. LD 219 seeks to implement a one-for-one syringe exchange model, limiting participants to one new syringe for each used syringe returned. This restrictive approach directly undermines the effectiveness of SSPs and ignores decades of evidence-based research.

Limiting access to sterile syringes will inevitably lead to increased syringe reuse. Treating infections resulting from unsafe injection practices, such as abscesses, endocarditis, and osteomyelitis, places a significant burden on our healthcare system. LD 219 will drive up these costs, further straining already limited resources. Rural Mainers, who often face limited access to healthcare and transportation, will be disproportionately affected by LD 219. Restricting syringe access will force them to engage in riskier injection practices, putting their health at greater risk. A one-for-one exchange model forces SSP staff to handle and count large numbers of used syringes, increasing the risk of accidental needle stick injuries and potential disease transmission.

Instead of restricting access to life-saving services, we should support legislation that strengthens harm reduction efforts. I urge lawmakers to support the bills introduced by Representative Rana, which establish a grant program to support safe syringe disposal and medical waste management, and provide SSPs with greater flexibility to operate additional locations, ensuring access for rural and unhoused populations. These bills offer a sensible, evidence-based approach to addressing concerns about improperly discarded syringes without jeopardizing public health.

LD 219 is a dangerous and misguided bill that will undermine public health and safety in Maine. I urge the legislature to reject this harmful legislation and instead support evidence-based policies that prioritize the health and well-being of all Mainers. We need to support the bills that support safe disposal, and expanded access to SSP services. Thank you.