

Testimony of Doug Dunbar from Hermon, Maine

**In Opposition to LD 219:**

An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange Programs to a One-for-one Exchange

Joint Standing Committees on Health and Human Services

March 17, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Doug Dunbar. I reside in Hermon and have deep concern about an alarming and expanding HIV outbreak in the Bangor area

([www.bangordailynews.com/2025/03/05/bangor/bangor-health/hiv-cases-penobscot-county-continue-rising-health-official-fears-joam40zk0w/](http://www.bangordailynews.com/2025/03/05/bangor/bangor-health/hiv-cases-penobscot-county-continue-rising-health-official-fears-joam40zk0w/)).

As a person in recovery from alcohol use disorder (OUD) and founder of a non-profit dedicated to addressing the crises of homelessness, substance use disorders (SUD), and other mental health challenges in our communities, I am also continually worried about the ongoing epidemic of opioid use disorder (OUD). For me and the non-profit, the priorities are helping to keep people alive and doing what's possible to assist them in becoming healthier.

Because of these concerns and worries, and for other reasons, I write to urge your opposition to LD 219. No one wants syringe waste in our community parks, trails or other public locations. There are ways to address that legitimate problem without putting the lives of many, many people—and public health in general—at great risk.

**This legislation presents the very real potential to create profound harm--accelerating the spread of HIV, damaging or ending many lives, and costing the state in numerous ways. The research is clear: limiting clean syringes in the way proposed by LD 219 endangers individuals and is detrimental to public health.**

Understandable concerns about syringes not being properly disposed will be addressed in other bills during this legislative session. Please vote against LD 219. It will absolutely cause far more harm than good.

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After three decades of holding positions in the Legislature, Governor's office, Secretary of State's office, U.S. House, U.S. Senate and elsewhere in government, I have been privileged to do *more meaningful work* for the past few years engaging directly with individuals experiencing homelessness—many also suffering from serious health problems.

It is the honor of my life, but I want government to do more—not less—to mitigate the crisis of homelessness and ensure I and others have fewer people—not more—to serve. Alarming, Part S of the Governor's Supplemental Budget (LD 209) would make the crisis worse—harming children, individuals with disabilities, entire families, and whole communities.

Part S makes would limit housing support under the General Assistance Program, except for temporary housing and emergency shelters, to a maximum of three (3) months in a 12-month period per household. It would also limit municipalities from exceeding the maximum levels of assistance for **all** non-housing related assistance to no more than 30 days in a 12-month period per household.

As many of you know, these change would almost certainly create significant additional burdens for the already stressed homeless response system and the individuals it serves. At a time of full shelters, an extraordinary deficiency in affordable housing units, and pitifully little in the way of rental assistance, Maine cannot afford what Part S proposes.

General Assistance is essential to moving people into housing and keeping individuals & families from entering the homeless response system when they become precariously housed. Limits are already in place. Expanding them would be detrimental to some of the most vulnerable people in Maine. This 'penny-wise and pound-foolish' approach may ultimately prove costly to taxpayers as well.

More support, not less, is needed from Augusta to address the crisis of homelessness. At a minimum, please oppose this unwise and harmful proposal. Vulnerable children, families, and individuals suffering from a range of illnesses or disabilities should not pay the price of belt-tightening at the State House. Thanks for your time and consideration of this plea for help.