



Neither For Nor Against LD 219, “An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange Programs to a One-for-One Exchange”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Jared Gay, and I am testifying on behalf of United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM) neither for nor against LD 219. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this complex and important issue.

United Way of Southern Maine works to bring people, organizations, and resources together to address immediate needs and build long-term solutions to the challenges facing our communities. Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) play a crucial role in preventing the spread of communicable diseases, reducing overdose deaths, and providing a touchpoint for individuals to access treatment and other critical services. At the same time, we recognize that improperly discarded syringes have raised concerns among residents, businesses, and local officials, and these concerns deserve thoughtful consideration.

This is not a simple issue, and we urge policymakers to take a balanced approach that protects public health while also addressing public safety concerns related to syringe disposal. Restricting syringe access has the potential to increase the spread of infectious diseases, but a lack of proper disposal options also creates challenges for communities. For this reason, we encourage the Legislature to convene a statewide task force that includes government representatives, businesses, service providers, public health experts, and community members, including people with lived experience, to explore strategies that support both safe syringe access and proper disposal.

A thoughtful, collaborative approach could help ensure that the health benefits of SSPs remain intact while also addressing syringe litter concerns.

United Way of Southern Maine remains committed to working with policymakers and community partners to find solutions that improve public health while ensuring our communities remain safe and welcoming for all. Thank you for your time and consideration, and we welcome the opportunity to support efforts to address this issue in a comprehensive, evidence-based way.