



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association In Opposition to:
LD 1024: An Act to Expand the List of Crimes That Do Not Qualify for Immunity Under Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance**

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State House, Room 436
Monday, March 31, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individual members and nearly 70 organizations across the state. MPHA works to optimize the health of people and places in Maine through advocacy, education, partnerships, and public health workforce development. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

MPHA opposes LD 1024: "An Act to Expand the List of Crimes That Do Not Qualify for Immunity Under Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance." This legislation would roll back protections of the expanded Good Samaritan Law by adding new crimes to the list of crimes that can be charged at the scene of an overdose.

In 2019, Governor Mills made it law to exempt people from arrest or prosecution for the possession of illicit drugs and drug paraphernalia, as well as violations of probation if they are in good faith calling 911 to seek medical assistance for another person experiencing a drug-related overdose. In 2022, the law was expanded to cover anyone who is helping the person who is overdosing, and a person who is experiencing an overdose and needs medical assistance. If 911 is called from the scene of an overdose, the person who is overdosing and anyone who is helping that person cannot be arrested or prosecuted for most crimes, including all drug crimes. They also cannot be arrested on warrants or have their bail, probation, community confinement, or deferred disposition revoked. These protections do not extend to crimes against children, sex crimes, operating under the influence, or violent crimes. We believe those provisions save lives; rolling them back would be harmful to public health.

Maine has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic. Indeed, Maine continues to be one of the top 10 states for the highest rates of overdose deaths.¹ Between 2014-2024, more than 4,750 people in Maine lost their lives to fatal overdoses.² According to the [Maine Drug Data Hub](#), drug deaths in Maine were trending upward between 2014-2018 and started to fall in 2019. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maine once again saw an increase in overdose deaths, with 636 fatal overdoses in 2021, a 23% increase over 2020.³ However, data suggest that we may have turned the tide: In 2024, there were 490 overdose deaths, which is 19.1% lower than the total confirmed fatal overdoses for 2023 (606 deaths). Maine's most recent monthly overdose report ([January 2025](#)) shows that 78% of fatalities were accidental; in 2024, 92% of drug overdose fatalities were accidental. The total number of nonfatal overdoses in 2024 was 8,045, which is 13.3% lower than the total reported nonfatal overdoses for 2023 (9,275).⁴

A major contributing factor to the reduction in overdose deaths, in addition to Maine's Good Samaritan Law, is the wider spread distribution of Naloxone. In 2019, the Maine Naloxone Distribution Initiative was launched to provide overdose education, prevention and naloxone distribution through community and public health partners. Since its inception, naloxone doses have been distributed monthly, and the cumulative number of overdose reversals has exceeded 10,000 in the past six years.

There are socioeconomic disparities associated with opioid misuse and related harms. A systematic review identified socioeconomic factors related to opioid overdoses, including poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, poor housing, and criminal justice system involvement.⁵ Indeed, in Maine, prior overdose history was reported for 30% of fatalities and transient housing status was reported for 14% of fatalities in the 2024 overdose report.

We believe existing provisions save lives; rolling them back would be harmful to public health. We respectfully request you to vote LD 1024 "Ought Not to Pass." Thank you for your consideration.

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics [Drug overdose mortality by state](#). 2022. Last updated: January 10, 2025.

² Russell R. (2024, December 29). [Is Maine finally turning the tide on overdose deaths? Maybe](#). *Portland Press Herald*.

³ Billings R. (2021, January 19). [Maine shattered its annual record for overdose deaths in 2021](#). *Portland Press Herald*.

⁴ Sorg MH, Soucier DS, Sarker PM. 2024. [Maine monthly overdose report for December 2024](#). Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine.

⁵ van Draanen J, Tsang C, Mitra S, Karamouzian M, Richardson L. Socioeconomic marginalization and opioid-related overdose: A systematic review. *Drug Alcohol Depend*. 2020;214:108127.