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4/28/2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1738 – *An Act to Establish the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program to Support Public Health Efforts in the State*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide information neither for nor against LD 1738, *An Act to Establish the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program to Support Public Health Efforts in the State*.

LD 1738 will establish a syringe disposal grant program to be managed by Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC). If enacted, Maine CDC will be responsible for disseminating grant funds to community organizations or municipalities to assist their efforts in disposal of syringe waste. This bill aims to address the issue of improperly discarded syringe waste by funding community programs and municipalities to manage and appropriately dispose of syringe waste.

Maine CDC is neither for nor against this legislation as it acknowledges the value of funding such programs, while also recognizing the cost of implementation. Maine CDC contracts with syringe service programs (SSPs) to prevent transmission of infectious disease by providing sterile drug injection equipment and its disposal. Proper disposal of syringe waste is important as it reduces likelihood of accidental needle-prick injuries. The best way to reduce syringe waste in public spaces is by developing programs in line with evidence-based harm reduction best practices. Maine's SSPs have implemented syringe waste disposal efforts that work; however, these efforts are expensive to properly collect and destroy syringe waste. Maine's SSPs use limited funding for properly disposing of syringes collected at their locations, plan clean up days and distribute personal sharps containers. Some municipalities fund collection sites and disposal with their city budgets. As such, LD 1738 will benefit these public health efforts, supporting the continuation, expansion, or development of syringe waste disposal efforts in Maine.

Maine CDC agrees with the intention of LD 1738, however, there is concern regarding Maine CDC's capacity to absorb the work required. Work needed to implement this bill will include grant funding, contract management, technical assistance, and data analysis and reporting, and Maine CDC cannot fully support within its current structure.

Currently, communities throughout Maine are concerned about syringe waste in public spaces. A variety of innovative efforts are being implemented throughout Maine that seek to reduce syringe waste, such as public biohazard waste disposal containers, distribution of personal biohazard waste

containers, education, call and email lines for syringe pick up, and a syringe redemption program. However, funding is limited to ensure the sustainability of all these efforts. LD 1738 will help address the issue of syringe waste in public spaces by providing the financial support necessary. Investing in syringe waste disposal efforts is the best way to target the issue of improperly discarded syringes.

To conclude, Maine CDC is neither for nor against LD 1738. If enacted, it will be greatly beneficial for our public health efforts, however, there are concerns regarding Maine CDC's capacity to implement and fund this project appropriately. Maine CDC will need additional staff to properly support LD 1738. Regardless of this issue, Maine CDC does believe that LD 1738 can effectively address syringe waste issues in Maine.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Puthiery Va".

Puthiery Va

Director

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Maine Department of Health and Human Services