



Testimony in Support: LD 1738: An Act to Establish the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program

April 28, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Committee on HHS,

My name is Courtney Gary-Allen, and I serve as the Executive Director of ME-RAP—a grassroots network of Mainers dedicated to advancing community-driven, policy-based solutions to substance use. I'm here today to testify in strong support of LD 1738 on behalf of our statewide team.

While many of you know ME-RAP for our advocacy at the Maine State Legislature, we also provide direct services, education, and recovery resources for people who use drugs, people in recovery, young people, families, and allies across Maine. One of our current initiatives is the Access Center—a hybrid recovery community center set to open in Augusta this June—offering both recovery support like peer meetings and coaching, and harm reduction services such as syringe exchange and naloxone distribution.

For the past four years, ME-RAP has organized community cleanup events in Augusta, including syringe and encampment cleanups. Over that time, we've safely disposed of thousands of syringes and bags of trash, with more than 70 volunteers from the recovery community stepping up to help. We've done this without dedicated funding—because we see the need firsthand. Every day, we witness the public health risks and community safety concerns caused by improper syringe disposal.

While some may be tempted to respond to this issue by restricting access to SSPs, we need to be clear: doing so would make the problem worse, not better. SSPs are not the cause of discarded syringes. To the contrary, they are one of the most effective solutions we have for reducing biohazard waste. When SSPs are equipped with the resources to deploy safe disposal options, they reduce the spread of infectious disease, prevent overdose deaths, and improve community safety.¹ The lesson is clear: properly funding disposal options for syringes reduces harm for everyone.

LD 1738 offers a pragmatic and evidence-based path forward. This bill establishes the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program within the Maine CDC, which will provide grant funding to community organizations, municipalities, and SSPs to expand and improve syringe disposal efforts. That includes installing indoor and outdoor disposal boxes, supporting syringe cleanup, and hiring staff to manage these efforts. This is how we create cleaner, safer neighborhoods—by providing real tools and direct action.

By passing LD 1738, you will be supporting public safety in a way that works. You'll be empowering local communities—those who best understand the needs on the ground—to tailor disposal strategies to their unique contexts. Whether it's a rural town or an urban neighborhood, this program gives communities the resources to act. LD 1738 strikes the right balance. It protects public safety and ensures continued access to life-saving care. It is a solution that meets the moment we are in.

I thank you for your time and am willing to answer any questions.

¹Research from the University of California San Francisco¹ found that communities with high rates of homelessness and limited harm reduction resources had significantly more improperly discarded syringes. But in cities that invested in housing and syringe service programs, this problem dropped dramatically. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2562866/>.

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