

Luke Sekera-Flanders
Needlepoint Sanctuary of Maine
LD 1738

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Luke Sekera-Flanders, I am a Public Health Community Organizer with Needlepoint Sanctuary of Maine. We are a harm reduction organization serving the Bangor area and one of two syringe services programs in Bangor. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 1738.

As a syringe service program, syringe waste and safe disposal is a regular component of our work. On a regular basis, community members contact us asking about how to dispose of syringe waste and if there is a service that could pick up syringes in public places and on private property. Needlepoint Sanctuary organizes community cleanups on a regular basis, distributes safe sharps containers, and offers education to community members about safe syringe disposal. For my part, I also pick up syringe waste I come across on my own time. But for as much as we do, more needs to be done. The need is that much greater. A grant program such as the one proposed in LD 1738 would cover a crucial need in communities like ours and alleviate a major public health concern.

We also work on the frontlines of the current HIV and Hepatitis C outbreak in Bangor, which as of now has reached 24 confirmed cases, primarily among injection drug users. Increased safe disposal routes reduces opportunities for transmission and benefits everyone.

Thank you for your time,

Luke Sekera-Flanders
Needlepoint Sanctuary of Maine