



Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Testimony in Support of:

*L.D. 1738, An Act to Establish the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program
to Support Public Health Efforts in the State*

April 28, 2025

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Heide Lester, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support the creation of a grant program to fund syringe disposal initiatives, which will reduce the risk of accidental needle-sticks on streets and in parks, restrooms, and other public areas.

Communities across Maine are facing a growing challenge: improperly disposed syringes in public spaces. Syringe service programs (SSPs) and disposal initiatives are endorsed by public health experts and others as effective in reducing harm and disease transmission,¹ but they must be equipped with the resources to carry out safe disposal efforts. As this bill establishes the Biohazard Waste Disposal Grant Program in order to provide grant funding to community organizations, municipalities, and SSPs to expand and improve syringe disposal endeavors, it will allow grantees to deploy disposal strategies that fit their communities – thereby strengthening public safety and supporting the life-saving work of SSPs in a manner that prioritizes unique local needs and realities.

We urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on L.D. 1738 and advance this legislation that will help communities with reducing syringe waste. This investment will not only reduce disease transmission and keep our communities cleaner and safer, but is far more cost-effective than the treatment of preventable infections and injuries.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

¹ “Syringe Services Programs.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs.
“Community Options for Safe Needle Disposal.” *United States Environmental Protection Agency*, epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-02/documents/med-govt_0.pdf