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Testimony in Support of LD 1646

An Act to Amend Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Regarding Suspected Drug-related Overdoses

January 07, 2026

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Catherine Rawson, and I am the Program Manager for the Maine Recovery Hub at Portland Recovery Community Center. I am here today in strong support of LD 1646.

Maine's Good Samaritan Law was passed in response to an overdose crisis that was claiming thousands of lives. Since then, calls for emergency help have increased, EMS responses have risen, and overdose deaths have begun to decline. Work has been done throughout the state to educate the public about Maine's Good Samaritan Law in an effort to combat any hesitation about calling 911 to save a life.

Maine's Good Samaritan Law is widely recognized as one of the strongest in the country because it provides broad protection when help is requested during an overdose. Realistically, they speak in panic, fear, and urgency.

In January 2025, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court's decision in *State v. Beaulieu* rejected the idea that callers must use specific "magic words" to receive Good Samaritan protections, but it also held that calling 911 for a general medical emergency was not enough, even when the situation later proved to be an overdose. This ruling has created confusion at the exact moment when clarity matters most, because any hesitation driven by fear of arrest or prosecution can cost a life.

LD 1646 fixes this by clearly extending Good Samaritan protections to calls for help when someone shows signs of a drug-related overdose, regardless of whether the caller uses the word "overdose," restoring the law's original intent and aligning it with real-world emergencies.

In 2024 alone, Maine reported more than 8,500 overdoses, with EMS responding to over 2,000 of them. When thousands of Mainers must make a split-second decision to call 911, the law must be clear, predictable, and trustworthy. We cannot go backwards.

LD 1646 preserves public confidence in Maine's Good Samaritan Law. I urge you to vote "ought to pass" and reaffirm Maine's commitment to saving lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Rawson, Program Manager
Maine Recovery Hub at Portland Recovery Community Center