

Testimony in Support of LD 1911

January 8, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Julie O'Neil, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1911, as someone that has both a past criminal record and someone that has also changed their life around after struggling with opioid addiction.

Proudly, I just celebrated 5 years of abstinence-based recovery in September. Being in recovery has allowed me to give back to my community and build a life that is healthy, meaningful, and full of connection. I sponsor women, I volunteer at local women's recovery houses, and I am known as someone that can be trusted in my Portland community.

However, many years ago I struggled with opioid use disorder, and was arrested for lower level crimes associated with my use. My addiction to opioids began at 15 when I was prescribed vicodin by my doctor for pain. I went to my first detox program at 22 years old. Over time, I started using illicit opiates when my physical dependence worsened. For years, I was in and out of treatment centers, halfway houses, sober houses, detoxes, hospitals, shelters, and holding cells. Looking back, I was fortunate in some ways. Many of my friends have not survived Maine's opioid epidemic.

I moved to Portland, Maine in 2018 to enter a highly structured sober living home to develop healthy coping skills and work toward rebuilding my life. I have since focused intensely on my education, and career development. I am close to finishing my Master's in Business Administration with a 3.9 GPA. Despite these efforts, I continue to encounter obstacles in my job search due to my past record.

Two years ago, I had been working at Bangor Savings Bank for nearly three years and I was ready to advance my career and was subsequently hired by Fidelity Investments. I gave the bank my two week notice, and said goodbye to all my customers and coworkers, which was very difficult after building such strong and meaningful relationships. After an additional 6 weeks, I got a call from the recruiter who rescinded the offer. I had already gone into the branch for a day, met my team, and connected with my manager on a personal level. I was deeply discouraged.

Just recently, I was hired by a prominent financial firm and was extremely eager to join the company and continue growing my financial skills. After a 6 week background check process, I received a brief and impersonal email informing me I was no longer being considered for the position I had been offered.

I did not choose to become addicted to opioids or to be prescribed them at 15. I have however chosen to work hard in recovery and become a productive member of society. Many people, including myself, want to work hard and contribute to our communities. LD 1911 would break down barriers and give many Mainers a fair shot at an earned second chance.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Julie O'Neil - Portland Resident