

Testimony for our beloved Jesse

Founder of Overdose Prevention Society, and the Church of Safe Injection

Written by his mother, Catherine Nash

4/10/2023

My name is Catherine Nash, I reside in Massachusetts, I am the mother of Jesse Harvey, and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1159.

I am proud to call myself Jesse's mother. Jesse lived and died for all the people suffering from the disease of Substance Use Disorder. Such resolve and strong commitment on your part to do the right thing and support this initiative that Jesse brought to light many years ago will surely save lives and help get people into treatment.

Isn't that your goal in the office you hold? To improve the lives of Mainers? All Mainers. To view them as precious people and not just "constituents?" To increase everyone's quality of life? Jesse always realized that all of the people he worked with and cared for were your constituents. That's why he always had voter registration cards, helped people understand the impact our state policy has on the day to day lives of people who use drugs. He was kind and patient as he explained to them what laws were standing in the way of real change in Maine. Outside, in the dark, on cold nights, he made sure people understood that it's only a handful of people who get to decide who lives or dies in our state. Every overdose death is a policy failure, right? While you all talk, we die. Jesse didn't just say those words at protests and die-ins, Jesse believed them. And now, three years after his death, what has changed.

As we well know, Jesse's Church of Safe Injection was at one time illegal and Jesse risked incarceration and now Jesse's Church is not only a legal, certified syringe service program, it receives funding from the state. So change does happen and can happen.

Jesse was never wrong in the things he stood for, founded and worked for as his Church bears out. Jesse founded this years ago, there is still time to do the right thing. I implore you, on behalf of Jesse and his lifesaving mission, to do the right thing and vote for this science and evidence-based initiative of best practices. Remember this, each and every life you help to save is a precious person; Jesse was helping to give them a voice.

Catherine: I will probably add at the end, for context since I am reading this publicly to the committee, that Jesse was alone when he died in 2020. Perhaps if there was a safe and welcoming place for him to go, we wouldn't have lost him. Is that ok?