

LD 1159: An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers

Sponsor: Representative Laurie Osher

Co-sponsors: Senator Beebe-Center, Representatives Crafts, Abdi, Boyer, Dhalac, LaRochelle,
Riseman, Roeder, and Sayre

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyers, Representative Osher & Members of the Health & Human Services.

Grand Afternoon. My name is Marshall Mercer. I am the Executive Director of Hope Broker Inc. We are a 501)3c nonprofit that focuses on creating spaces for the voices of the historically marginalized communities of Maine. And whatever abbreviations you want to give them.

I was once formerly enslaved to this system that has been designed to keep us divided & conquered & the drugs that helped to enforce the people's enslavement. I spent most of the beginning stages of my life having to leap many hurdles,

Dealing with abandonment issues due to my mothers extensive drug use, & not having a safe space, or support or being educated due to the shaming & fear of repercussions from the very people that were supposed to support her & love her. Leading to her isolating herself to the only people & things that would accept her.

Leaving me left alone to the evil devices of hate because ultimately everything she did was my fault. Her being gone & me taking the weight of her being gone from within, not innerstanding why my mother would leave me to suffer the mental abuse & physical abuse I had to endure. But it also gave me an overstanding of a society that has been divided & conquered by a system that was created by us.

Fast forward years of abuse, years of addiction, years of imprisonment. With the help of a community, the very community that we are speaking of today. I am now the Executive Director of a non profit that empowers leaders to step forward in their search to find what recovery means to them. Through relational Organizing, which consists of many different facets.

Peer Support, Harm reduction. Leading people to the resources they need through active listening. & the community is saying they want a safe place for them to go to begin their journey. The harm reduction community that has gone across our own beloved country, as well as travel across seas to get the proof in the pudding that we all keep seeking answers to. That there has never been a recorded death in any Harm Reduction Center.

Last year we had 636 of our community members that died due to accidental overdose. This year 716. We are doing something wrong. & it's time for a change. I have already lost most of my childhood friends & my mother & father to the way we allowing our suffering to recover. We together can make this change.

So I am here today in support of

**LD 1159: An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding
Harm Reduction Health Centers**

LD 1159 seeks to authorize the creation of Harm Reduction Health Centers (also known as Overdose Prevention Sites) in Maine. A Harm Reduction Health Center is a community-based resource center offering health screenings, disease risk reduction, infection prevention, access to treatment, peer support services, and safe, supervised spaces where a person may use pre-obtained substances. The centers are staffed by addiction medicine physicians, nurses, harm reduction specialists, and peer support workers.

& I am asking you to be in support of this as well. Thank you for taking your time to listening to me. Do you have any questions?

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