

April 10th, 2023

Greetings to Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, Representative Osher, and the Honorable Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Katie Morin, I'm a person in recovery, Mum of 3 amazing pre-teens, and an Augusta resident. I'm a committed Hope Brokers organizer, and I have experienced organizing for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project.

I'm here to give personal testimony in support of Harm Reduction Centers for I know the road to wellness isn't paved in gold. Nor is there just one pathway that leads to one's recovery, and personal wellness. As I shared, I'm a person in recovery. A parent in recovery. My children have experienced life with me during my struggle to do anything differently than what my survival mode had been conditioned to do.

Many different supports, and ways of practicing personal wellness while I found footing on my journey, has led me to know harm reduction saved my life. Practicing harm reduction continues to be a vital part of the foundation in my recovery. I have been witness to harm reduction practices catapulting peers into their recovery journey. Connecting with, and being of support to others along the way that they hadn't been able to do before.

It has allowed me to unlearn my survival mode strategies, and have a more wholesome understanding of my childrens unlearning their own survival mode strategies. So we all can heal from the traumas, and not die because we didn't have support in place that is proven to save lives.

When our 716 friends, family, and neighbors had lost everything, and found themselves at a point of ultimate darkness, they died, losing their opportunity in a Harm Reduction Center to wake up another day with less shame, guilt,

and despair. An opportunity to literally wake up, and try again with gaining footing on their path of personal wellness. An option that creates empowerment within our friends, family, and neighbors that sheds light into their darkest time because they aren't being left alone, shamed, and blamed for their circumstances. Lives are being restored, mutual support had, education lending insight to what isn't currently known, and ultimately healing, are the realities of Harm Reduction Centers. Oh, and no ~~more~~ deaths.

The data is in folks! Harm Reduction Centers are a pathway that supports our friends, family, and neighbors in their process of learning to live well. I understand how challenging this panel's experience is in sorting out all there is when considering Harm Reduction Centers. And I ask that there also be understanding in how challenging, and detrimental it is for our communities to wake up another day, unsure of who we will lose next, knowing we have the ability to provide an option that very well may be one's last. An option that breathes new life within our friends, families, and neighbors casting light into their darkest time. I am witness to many folks at their last option, who have been supported in taboo ways that have lended them the most powerful, and inspirational experience on finding their path to personal wellness.

It's time for our constituents, community organizations, and policy makers to sit at the same table with intentions of a continuous building of connection with our friends, families, and neighbors. Working towards mutual understanding of all worldviews that are valid and worthy of being heard. Explored with curiosity, not biases that we know create barriers to anyone being seen for who they really are. Ultimately bringing us all movement towards nurturing personal wellness through community inclusion, support, and genuine connection.

Thank you for listening, and I'm happy to answer any questions.