

Mikki Rice
Freeman Township
In Support
LD 1159: An Act to Establish A Pilot Project
Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyers and the esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Mikki Rice, I live in Freeman Twp. and I am testifying in support of LD 1159: An Act to Establish A Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers.

As a person that formerly used drugs and a person that has done plenty of research on harm reduction interventions (including Harm Reduction Health Centers/Overdose Prevention Centers) I am 100% in support of this bill and I urge you to vote ought to pass.

Maine set a record for the third consecutive year in 2022 with 716 overdose deaths, including 2 people that I knew personally. In February the Governor released a statement about the tragic number of people lost last year, and In that statement she said:

“My heart breaks with every life lost to a drug overdose, and my Administration will not rest until we reduce this number to zero. We will continue to work with advocates, the recovery community, and lawmakers to tackle this epidemic, to prevent addiction, to help more people access treatment and recovery, and to save lives.”

HRHCs are not a new concept. In fact they were used in Liverpool U.K. as early as the mid 1980s at the Merseyside Clinic There is plenty of research that shows that HRHCs work in multiple ways. They are not only a place where someone can go and use pre-obtained substances in a safe place and with oxygen and naloxone on-hand, but it is also a place where participants can receive or be linked to wrap-around care, including other harm reduction services, basic needs (such as housing, food, childcare, etc...), medical services and substance use treatment.

Research shows a benefit to people who use drugs and the neighborhoods in which the centers are located by reducing the number of overdose deaths, reducing substance-use related harms, and by reducing all-causes of mortality for people who use drugs. They are also shown to be cost effective¹
Nobody has ever died in an overdose prevention center, which is an important point to make. If we want to decrease the number of people who are dying preventable deaths due to overdose

¹ Overdose Prevention Centers: An Essential Strategy to Address the Overdose Crisis, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2794326#:~:text=OPCs%20have%20been%20found%20to,and%20to%20be%20cost%2Deffective>.

in this state and nationwide we are going to need to try evidence-based approaches such as Harm Reduction Health Centers. New York and Rhode Island have already started looking at the effectiveness of Harm Reduction Health Centers so let's follow suit.

I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1159 because it is an evidence-based approach. I don't know how many of you have lost someone you love to overdose, but I dearly miss the two people I lost this year and if someone was around when they used at least 1 of them (probably both) would still be here. Harm Reduction Health Centers won't get us to zero alone but it's a good step in the right direction.

Thank you and I will try to answer any questions you may have.

Mikki Rice
Freeman Twp.