



**Testimony in Favor of
LD 1159 An Act to Establish a 2 Year Pilot Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers**

April 10th, 2023

Greetings Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and other honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee of Health and Human Services, My name is Steven Knockwood. I am the Deputy Organizing Director for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP). I am also a person in long term recovery and an individual who has worked boots on the ground for the past three years with people who were suffering with active SUD. I stand before you today to give testimony in Favor of LD 1159 "An Act to Establish a 2 Year Pilot Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers"

I want to start by acknowledging the many perspectives that you will hear today in this matter. Some will be in support of this measure others will be against. All are valid, all hold truth for the individual speaking today. The global truth in this issue is everyday people who use drugs are dying and nothing we have tried has successfully decreased the number of preventable fatal overdoses in the state of Maine. These people are our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands and wives.

I hold a belief that meaningful change must always begin internally. Unless an individual changes something within themselves first meaningful change cannot happen. You may ask what that means. It means that a person must first believe within themselves that they are worthy of that change. That the change is possible and that they have the right to determine what that looks like for them. LD 1159 supports this internal process. The data shows that people who use these facilities in other parts of the nation and world where they currently exist do in fact recover. Their lives undergo a process of healing that leads to long term successful recovery. Also, not a single fatal overdose has ever happened at a Harm Reduction Health Center in the world. With that one single fact and the data that proves people that enter into this care setting more often than not complete a process that ends in long term sustained recovery should be sufficient for us to come together as a society as a whole and give individuals the opportunity to access this much needed pathway.

I believe that LD 1159 stands to finally impact this issue in a substantial way. First one needs to understand that Harm Reduction Health Centers are not a place to enable individuals to continue in addiction. They are places of connection. A place free of the stigma and shaming that individuals who use drugs face in all other settings. A setting in which one can start a process of healing that seeks to lessen the harm caused by substance use, empower individuals to believe they are capable of meaningful change and give them an environment free from the stigma and shame that often drives individuals further into the isolation that results in fatal overdose.

Some other important facts to consider is that data shows that current SSP's receive more used needles than they give out. This would in my opinion be increased by the fact that they would not have to leave the premises with harm reduction supplies, they would be disposed of 100% in a safe way not discarded in unsafe ways. Harm Reduction is not just a gateway to recovery, it is widely considered to be a pathway of recovery. That the definition of recovery is any change enacted by an individual that improves a person's quality of life is recovery.



**Testimony in Favor of
LD 1159 An Act to Establish a 2 Year Pilot Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers**

Today our system of recovery says to an individual suffering from SUD, they must be willing to meet the requirement of abstinence to receive the support and services essential to recovery. I believe that LD 1159 opens an avenue of recovery that doesn't currently exist within our state. Expanding recovery to all that will benefit from it.

The overwhelming good that LD 1159 stands to do deserves us all to approach it with an open mind. We need to show our community members that currently use drugs and are dying, that they deserve to get better. That they have the right to determine what it looks like to them and that we as a society are willing to support them on their journey to recovery. That they deserve to have healthcare free of the everpresent stigma and shame in our greater healthcare system. Most of the time stemming from lack of knowledge by healthcare professionals.

Please stand with the many who believe that LD 1159 will create such a change and vote in favor of this bill in work session

Nitap(thank you)
Steven Knockwood
steven@recoveryvoices.com
(207) 735-4427