



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers
Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

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Testimony in Support of LD 1159
**"An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction
Health Centers"**

Sponsored by Representative Osher
April 10, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Malory Shaughnessy and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers, providing services to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1159, "An Act to Establish a Pilot Project Regarding Harm Reduction Health Centers." According to SAMHSA, "Harm reduction is critical to keeping people who use drugs alive and as healthy as possible, and is a key pillar in the multi-faceted Health and Human Services' Overdose Prevention Strategy." I would like to thank Representative Osher for bringing this bill forward.

Last year, 716 people died from preventable overdoses, and hundreds more died from complications related to non-sterile equipment for substance consumption and Maine's inconsistent, contaminated drug supply. There has never been a fatal overdose in any of the over 120 existing Harm Reduction Health Centers, anywhere in the world, ever. The bottom line is that Harm Reduction Health Centers save lives.

Harm Reduction Health Centers have been implemented in countries all over the world since the 1980s and have had a proven positive impact on the community. Research shows that centers connect people to treatment and recovery support services and bridge gaps in healthcare for people who use drugs.

Each year in our state the number of accidental overdose deaths rises. And you all – and your colleagues before you -- spend a lot of time in this committee room trying to create solutions for the problem. Yet, the numbers still rise. And each one of those deaths is someone's child, our community member – a Mainer. The proposal in front of you today has a 100% effectiveness rate for saving lives. Again, there has never been a fatal overdose in any of the over 120 existing Harm Reduction Health Centers, anywhere in the world, ever. I respectfully ask each of you, if you want to save lives. If your answer is yes, then please say yes to this important common-sense proposal. Thank you.