

Testimony by Kelly Cookson in Support of LD 1315

Good afternoon.

My name is Kelly Cookson. I am first and foremost the mother of Ava, who is in long term recovery from heroin, and of Ella who is a sophomore at Penobscot Valley High School. I also am the director of a recovery community center that has an early intervention program and many affected teens who regularly participate in programs we offer.

Ella is very aware that her big sister would not be alive today if it wasn't for someone having Narcan in the right place at the right time. Many of the kids have had similar experiences, though sadly, not all were as lucky as my family has been. Ella voiced concern to me last year that she suspected none of the school staff had Narcan and asked to keep some in her backpack. She was worried for her classmates as she has been well educated at home about the dangers of pressed pills and drugs being cut with fentanyl. Her suspicions were confirmed to be correct when I met with the principal and staff recently. There was no Narcan at the school at all.

It's sad that this is something the kids need to worry about but it's reality. Drugs are in the schools, it can be in their homes, their friend's homes; it's everywhere. People, including children, are losing their lives unnecessarily. It is so preventable and so senseless.

There is no downside to supporting this bill. I can't think of a single one. Narcan will not harm someone who is not overdosing. It is so simple to use and readily available thanks to the efforts our state has made. The kids are speaking and saying they want this education at school and I think we need to listen to them! I think a lot of them are tired of being victims to the drug epidemic facing Maine and they want the opportunity to be empowered with tools they may need.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely

Kelly Cookson