



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Daniel J. Newman

33 Caribou Road
Belgrade, ME 04917
Phone: (207) 458-1837
Daniel.Newman@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Representative Daniel Newman in support of

LD 986, An Act to Ensure Safer Communities by Increasing the Punishment for Crimes Involving Fentanyl

Good Afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Representative Daniel Newman and I represent District 58, which includes Belgrade, Rome, Fayette, Mount Vernon, Vienna, and New Sharon. I am here before you today to present:

LD 986, “An Act to Ensure Safer Communities by Increasing the Punishment for Crimes Involving Fentanyl”

Fentanyl is the most dangerous substance being trafficked at this time.

According to data provided by the law library, in 2020 Fentanyl caused 336 deaths in Maine, that’s 67% of all drug deaths in this State which is an increase of 30% from 2019.

From 2013-2019 deaths from synthetic opioids have increased from 1.0 per 100,000 to 11.4 per 100,000. If you look at data provided by the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, that starts at 0% in 2013 it increases to 78% in 2021.

We keep hearing that the war on drugs was a failed policy, but since we have started to decrease penalties and legalize drug possession the amount of trafficking and deaths has skyrocketed.

We know we need to spend more money on treatment, but if we can’t get a handle on the amount of drugs coming into the State we will run out of money and at that point we will be sending out our overburdened EMS services to transport bodies rather than save lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

District 58 Belgrade, Fayette, Mount Vernon, Rome, Vienna & New Sharon