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*Testimony of Representative Grayson Lookner introducing*  
**LD 1364, An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe  
Consumption Sites**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable colleagues on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Grayson Lookner, and I represent House District 113 which includes part of Portland. I'm here today to present **LD 1364, An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption Sites**.

"People who use drugs do not deserve to die." These poignant words were spoken by my friend and prominent recovery activist Jesse Harvey just months before his life was tragically lost to an opioid overdose. I don't need to remind this committee that our state is experiencing an accelerating crisis of opioid overdose deaths. Despite the legislature's best efforts, our state is on track to lose over 700 of our neighbors, friends, siblings, parents and children to preventable deaths this year. We are a compassionate and humane state, and everyone deserves as many chances as it takes to live and find recovery. That is why I have introduced this bill.

People who use opioids have a condition that requires evidence-based mental health and medical interventions. Fortunately, such interventions exist, so why don't we pursue them? For too long, the ongoing stigmatization of opioid use disorder has led Maine to criminalize people experiencing mental health crises and drive them further into the shadows. Tragically, too many of them never reemerge to find recovery and become integral parts of our state's tight-knit communities.

This bill would allow the most impacted municipalities in the State of Maine to contract with providers to create Safe Consumption Sites, where peer-recovery and medical specialists will ensure that people using previously obtained drugs do not die while consuming them. There are numerous reasons why we should do this:

- Safe Consumption Sites are proven to save lives. In Vancouver, Canada, where the first program was established, not a single death has been reported at the facility. The success of this program has led New York State to establish similar programs, which have seen similar success. Other states are pursuing these programs, Maine should be among them.
- These programs provide access to counseling services and medical treatment, giving people who use opioids low-barrier access to recovery resources. These are the avenues that many individuals will use to pursue recovery and become contributing members of their communities.
- They are cost-effective. Safe Consumption Sites will reduce Maine's over-reliance on emergency medical services, law-enforcement and corrections to respond to opioid overdose situations. This will in turn ensure that these vital public services are reserved for times when they are needed, increasing public safety. Additionally, these programs reduce public drug use, which is also a public safety concern.
- This is a home rule issue. If a municipality in Maine wishes to allow for these services, this bill will allow them to do so.

In the recovery community, there is an oft-repeated phrase that “the definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” With this bill, we have the opportunity to pursue a new, proven means of saving lives and creating opportunities for recovery.

Please join me in supporting this legislation so we can begin to create real solutions to this crisis that has for far too-long evaded our best efforts at saving lives in our great state.

Thank you.