



**Testimony in Favor of  
LD 1364 An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption  
Sites**

April 27, 2023

Greetings Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and other honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Steven Knockwood I am the Deputy Organizing Director for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP) and a person in long term recovery. ME-RAP stands in full support of LD 1364: An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption Sites.

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 hold truth for the individual speaking them today. The bottom line 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. We, as a society, have spoken to say it is our belief that people who use drugs do not deserve to die.

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 themselves. LD 1364 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 Safe Consumption Site 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. SAMHSA defines recovery as: A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. This definition to me is exactly what a Safe Consumption Site accomplishes.

**Contrary to many peoples belief that Safe Consumption Sites enable people to continue or lead people to use, all data from the more than 200 sites world wide show that a remarkable 50% and higher rate of long term sustained recovery, according to the Recovery Research Institute**. Also, no increase of use by the populations that live in the communities where Safe Consumption Sites exist has ever been documented and supported by data.



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I believe that LD 1364 stands as the best solution to finally impact this issue in a substantial way. First, one needs to understand that Safe Consumption Sites 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 which the data shows as the number one reason for fatal overdose. Agencies of the State already encourage such PSA's as Never Use Alone coined by OPTIONS tells us that this solution is in fact proven Best Practices. Our Good Sam Law directs people to call for medical assistance, which in our state, response times make it impossible to properly reverse overdoses without serious harm and/or death in many cases. LD 1364 establishes instant medical response to overdose that has never fatally failed and dramatically improves on our ability to intervene before physical harm occurs from an overdose response time.

Today our system of recovery says to an individual suffering from SUD, they must be willing to meet the requirements of abstinence to receive the support and services essential to recovery. I believe that LD 1364 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 1364 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 live and 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 self determined journey to recovery. That they deserve to have healthcare free of the everpresent stigma and shame in our greater healthcare system.

Please stand with the many who believe that LD 1364 will create such a change and vote in favor of this bill in the work session. I am willing to answer any questions from the committee and ME-RAP can provide assistance at work session if the committee would like.

Thank you,  
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