



IN FAVOR of LD1364:

An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption Sites

April 27th, 2023

Greetings: Chairpersons Senator Bee-Be-Center and Representative Salisbury and the Criminal and Public Safety Committee. I am Jeanne Marquis, a parent of a person in recovery, Selectman for China, Maine; and an organizer for Maine Recovery Advocacy Project. I am testifying in favor of establishing Safe Consumption Sites in Maine.

When you have a family member with substance-use disorder, you can't wish their addiction away. Your loved one needs to choose the path to recovery on their own. Until they make this choice, we need to keep them alive. Safe Consumption Sites will keep our sons and daughters alive.

Harm Reduction is not a new concept to Maine. Since 1998, this state has allowed Syringe Service Programs because we know that clean syringes reduce the risk of bloodborne infections such as HIV and hepatitis. Safe Consumption sites, otherwise known as Harm Reduction Health Centers are Maine's next step in evidence-based initiatives addressing substance use. These centers will be run by experienced harm reduction specialists and nursing staff who will support clients who have consumed substances on-site by monitoring and providing emergency medical care if necessary. All of the centers will also provide support by recovery specialists so when people make the choice to choose recovery, they will have the help they need.

As an elected official, I am pleased to see there is a clause in the bill that municipalities have the opportunity to decide if a center is right for their community. It would be a choice of the residents; one I hope they would make.

You may hear an argument from our own state's opioid response committee that our 18 recovery centers act as Harm Reduction Centers, that is not true. Recovery centers do not allow drug consumption onsite, because that would trigger people in serious recovery. Recovery centers do not have medical staff on hand in case of emergencies. Our 18 recovery centers will not substitute for Harm Reduction Centers; we need both to save lives and support recovery.

To the critics who think Harm Reduction Health Centers will enable more drug use, I say this also is not true. What these Harm Reduction Health Centers will do is enable people to not have to use alone, enable people access to related health services, enable people to have access to recovery services, and, most importantly, enable people to live.

So I urge you to vote in favor of LD1364. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeanne Marquis
China, Maine