

Wednesday, May 3, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD1719

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Glenn Gordon and I reside in Mexico, ME. I am providing testimony in support of LD1719. I am Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) and the Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach Naloxone and Safety (OPTIONS) Liaison for Oxford County.

There are many challenges that make it difficult to address the number of fatal overdoses and the substance use epidemic in the state of Maine. One of the biggest barriers to recovery for people is timely access to medically managed withdrawal services (detox).

There are many challenges with accessing detox and they can be complicated by the choice of substances that an individual uses. I have transported people to hospital-based detox and they have been discharged after short wait periods because the initial withdrawal symptoms were determined not to be severe enough to require hospital admission. It can take 24-48 hours for symptoms to fully develop for someone withdrawing from any substance, in particular opiates. They are discharged because their symptoms are deemed to be non-life threatening. Every time we release someone seeking treatment into the community where they came from, we put them back into a life-threatening situation. When someone self-refers themselves to withdraw from any substance, it should be treated as life-threatening. If someone leaves without adequate treatment to return to the only environment familiar and available to them and fatally overdoses, we are complicit in that death.

In Oxford County, I have traveled over 50 miles at the request of an individual seeking services, only to have them discharged in less than 24 hours on many occasions from hospital-based detox settings by individuals who wanted to be admitted and were willing to participate in treatment.

We know that when a person asks for help, that there is often a narrow window of readiness, willingness and physical presence. It is important that we improve ease and immediacy of access to care. Availability and transportation are huge barriers. An increased number of facilities, especially in rural areas like Oxford County, will save lives by improving access.

Respectfully

Glenn Gordon, CADC, OPTIONS Liaison, Oxford County  
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