

Testimony Against LD 1975

January 17, 2023

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Respected Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Dr. Liesha Petrovich, a resident of Pittston, and I am here to urge you not to decriminalize fentanyl. My daughter is in active fentanyl addiction, and decriminalizing fentanyl increases the risk to everyone in our communities. As the mother of someone with active fentanyl addiction, this does nothing to save my child and increases her risk of overdose.

My daughter is currently at the Cumberland County Jail. I am beyond thankful for this. This means she's not sleeping outside in an encampment, she's not committing crimes to fuel her addiction, and she's getting some of the medical help she so clearly needs.

It takes a LOT to push a loving mother to the point where she begs the State, politicians, mayors, district attorneys, and anyone else who will listen to please - please - put her child in jail for the crimes she's committed.

It's a desperate act from a desperate mother trying one last thing to save her child. I grant you, it's not ideal. But it's all I have.

I believe the fentanyl crisis response must include both compassionate and common sense measures. The first two sections of LD 1975 include some amazing provisions, including establishing receiving centers in every county in Maine. I fully support this part of the bill.

However, decriminalizing fentanyl possession lacks common sense. Fentanyl is the number one cause of death for Americans 18-45. Additionally, deaths from accidental fentanyl poisoning are rising in children. According to the CDC, Maine's rate of drug overdose death is eighth in the entire country.

In Portland, Oregon, they are now reconsidering the decriminalization of fentanyl. As stated by an Oregon police officer on the front lines of fentanyl addiction: "There is no silver bullet. We need to create rewards and consequences to engage in treatments."

Decriminalizing the most deadly drug in the United States lacks common sense, and increases the risks of accidental fentanyl poisoning, including children.

And the elephant in the room is that no one in the encampments or shelters is getting picked up for possession of fentanyl. Anyone who says otherwise is disingenuous at best. Not one of the charges against my child has anything to do with fentanyl. But they are all the consequences of fentanyl.

I urge you to reject the decriminalization aspect of LD 1975.

While it is important to support everyone in their recovery, we also can't forget the thousands of Mainers who are in active fentanyl addiction. My daughter has already overdosed multiple times and it's a miracle she is still alive. We can't overlook fentanyl addicts' risks now by decriminalizing the drug that is killing them. Those in active addiction won't make it to recovery if they are one of the millions of people who have already died from opioids in this country.

We can have both a compassionate and common sense approach to the fentanyl crisis. I urge you to reject the decriminalization aspect in LD 1975 and focus on real solutions to decrease the risk to all Mainers.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dr. Liesha Petrovich

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