

1/17/2024

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

My name is Nicole Lemay, I am a resident of Sabattus, and I am here to share a piece of my story with you as someone with lived experience. Ten years ago I was the proud owner of a childcare center, and also a role model in my community. This all changed when I was involved in a car accident and was prescribed opiates by my doctor. Six months later, I was dependent on this medication and my life became unmanageable.

In 2014 the stigma of addiction was real, the punishment for drug related offenses were severe, and the support was limited. My substance use led to incarceration. The carceral system did not treat my trauma, or fix any underlying issues that were holding me back from healing. Community support and treatment is what I needed and is what helped me thrive once again.

I now stand before you as a woman in long term recovery. I have meaningful employment, am a tax paying citizen, and am proud to provide support for those who are system impacted, men and women in recovery housing, and also those searching for resources to get well.

I am here to express my strong support for LD 1975 .People with substance use disorder need timely access to all points of recovery. If a person seeks treatment, the window of time that a person gets into treatment is critical. Currently, too many loved ones are dying before they have access to treatment. Our people are overdosing in the county jails. This is a public health crisis and a crisis that affects Maine as a whole. We cannot wait for the criminal legal system to save us. We need to be progressive.

I think back to seven years ago, when a former Maine governor believed that people who used substances were **not worth** the cost of Naloxone when overdosing. Today, it can be found in most places in quantity and is continuing to save lives. My point being is Maine has made progress. However, there is still work to do, people are still dying. We need access to treatment and community support, not incarceration. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1975. Let's work together to restore lives and communities. Thank you for your time.