

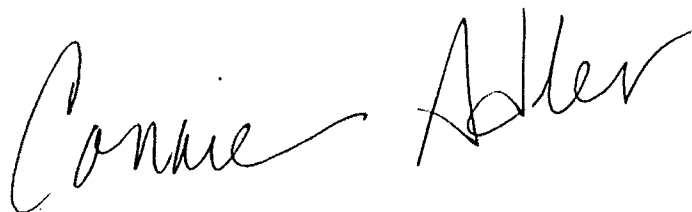
January 17, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am Dr. Connie Adler, and I am writing in support of LD 1975, *An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs*. I am a retired physician from Farmington. In my last few years of practice, I took care of many patients with substance use disorder and provided Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), including pregnant and postpartum women. I was repeatedly struck by the courage and resilience of my patients as they struggled with obtaining treatment, redefining their support systems and maintaining sobriety. I heard over and over about the difficulties they and their friends had in initiating treatment because of lack of housing, alienation from family supports, need to care for children and fear of losing custody of children, distance from treatment programs, etc. I support this bill because it would truly save lives by organizing and making available pathways to treatment for many, especially those, like my patients, who live in rural areas. For those who are not yet ready for treatment, it would help to keep them alive until they are. Just like any other medical condition, we can advise but cannot dictate a treatment program. But the support and triage available through this bill can make enormous differences in people's survivability.

In preparing this testimony, I thought over and over again about a woman I treated who, on questionable legal advice, pled guilty to a felony. She was not selling drugs, though she was certainly using them. Still, she faced a felony charge due to Maine's very strict possession laws. As she moved through treatment and tried to go back to work, that record clung to her and prevented her from obtaining employment in the fields in which she had previously excelled. She had to take much lower paying jobs which limited both her ability to care for her family and their housing options. Rethinking the criminal code as it applies to drug possession and use is also an imperative. I appreciate your attention to these issues that will hopefully help us to reverse the terrible trend of loss of life across our state. All Mainers deserve a chance at a successful life.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Connie Adler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Constance Adler, MD  
Chesterville, ME