

TESTIMONY OF DIRECTOR RICHARD R. DESJARDINS  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
MAINE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

(In Support) L.D. 59

**“An Act to Ban the Drug Tianeptine”**

Submitted by the Department of Public Safety pursuant to Joint Rule 204. Reference to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety suggested and ordered printed.

Sponsored by: Rep. Lemelin

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Hearing Date: February 3, 2025, at 09:30 a.m. in Room 436, State House

Sen. Beebe-Center, Rep. Hasenfus and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Richard R. Desjardins, and I am the Director of the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, representing the Maine Department of Public Safety.

I am here today to testify In Support of LD 59, “An Act to ban the drug Tianeptine”. This bill as written would add the drug Tianeptine to the list of prohibited drugs in Maine and amend sections in Title 17-A MRSA §1102.

As the Director of Maine’s Drug Enforcement Agency, and a law enforcement officer in Maine for many years, I have witnessed firsthand the devastation illicit drugs have had across our State. I’m sure many of you have been witnesses to the tragedy of substance use disorder, the lives taken and the harm to all involved.

Based on what we know and have learned about the drug Tianeptine, it is not approved as a drug for humans in the U.S, the substance is considered dangerous and is banned in several states including (Alabama, Michigan, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, Indiana, and Ohio). It is often marketed as a cheap alternative to an opioid and sometimes referred to as “Gas Station Heroin” and easily bought on-line.

To our knowledge, Tianeptine has yet to be experienced in Maine in a criminal case. The State’s laboratory Director and MDEA’s Drug Prosecutor indicate that the substance “may” fall within the definition of an “opiate” under Section 1101, which would make it a “narcotic drug” or potentially a “counterfeit” drug under 17-A M.R.S. §1104, which was used when the chemical formulation of “bath salts” were evolving beyond Maine’s legal definition. However, establishing a violation using our existing statutes would involve additional work to establish a criminal case, take precious time, and has no guarantee of success. We believe taking proactive steps to ban this drug and sending a clear message to individuals that would consider offering this drug as an alternative substance to other

illegal drugs makes good sense. Using the concept of “if it’s predictable, it’s preventable” we support the preemptive move to make this drug illegal in Maine.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have, either now or at any future work session.