



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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### *Testimony of Rep. Michael H. Lemelin*

#### **LD 59, "An Act To Ban The Drug Tianeptine"**

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety committee. I am Rep. Michael Lemelin, serving House District 53, Chelsea, Randolph, Pittston, and Dresden.

I am here to present my bill to ban a very dangerous drug, "Tianeptine", also known as "gas station heroin". What makes this drug so dangerous is "this is a mistaken identity type of drug." Tianeptine has increasingly been used as a substitute or enhancer of opioids, with abuse growing exponentially over the last few years. The drug's true identity emerged after researchers figured out it's a type of opioid—one that does, in fact, work in a way that is similar to heroin. The fact that people think the drug is safe, is another reason it is deadly. There are no safe guards.

Imagine your teenage child goes to a gas station and buys two bottles of tianeptine and drinks them and then drives down the road. They have no clue they are about to be high on an opioid type substance. Should we wait until we see the effects, or act prudently now?

I introduced this bill two years ago, and we decided to wait. Since then, there have been many instances of overdoses. This could have been avoided.

Maine does everything to prevent drug addiction deaths. Very little to stop the actual addiction. Tianeptine cannot be used in the USA for medicinal purposes.

The National Poison Data Center has seen quadruple cases of overdose. The FDA does not control tianeptine, because it is sold as a dietary supplement, which is not controlled by the FDA.

Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan, Florida, and Mississippi have made the drug illegal. The argument that a person from New Hampshire can come to Maine and not know it is illegal here is laughable. You are not to enter a state without knowing its laws. The states that have made tianeptine illegal are not concerned about other states bordering them being legal.

The criminalization of drugs, like tianeptine, does NOT merely extend the long shadow of losing the "War on Drugs".