



Northern New England

**Poison Center**

**Testimony of Dr. Mark Neavyn, MD, FACMT**

**Northern New England Poison Center 689**

**In Support of LD**

**“An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center”**

**March 12, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Dr. Mark Neavyn, Medical Director of the Northern New England Poison Center, which serves Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 689, “An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center,” and would like to thank Senator Nangle for bringing this bill forward.

The Northern New England Poison Center manages nearly 90 cases daily, requiring almost 100 additional calls daily to assist with more severe poisonings. Nearly half originate from Maine. In fact, the Northern New England Poison Center managed over 14,000 cases, requiring almost 18,000 additional calls for further assistance and almost 700 consultations with toxicologists, from across the State of Maine just last year alone. Yet, the state funding for Maine poison center services is less than half of that provided by New Hampshire (similar population as Maine) and less than that from Vermont, a state with half the population of Maine. The funding from the State of Maine has decreased from the original amount provided in 2000 and has not increased in the 25 years since then. The Northern New England Poison Center would close if MaineHealth did not cover the lack of funding for State of Maine poison center services – almost \$1.3 million last year alone.

The Northern New England Poison Center plays a crucial role in safeguarding the health and well-being of our community. By providing immediate, expert advice on the management of poisonings and exposures to toxic substances, the center helps prevent unnecessary emergency room visits, reduces healthcare costs, and most importantly, saves lives. The center's services are indispensable, particularly in rural areas where access to medical care can be limited.

The proposed appropriation of increasing the current funding by \$335,000 annually for the fiscal years 2025-26 and 2026-27 is a modest investment that will yield significant benefits, saving well over \$13 for every dollar invested. These funds will ensure that the center can continue to operate 24/7, providing critical support to both healthcare professionals and the general public. The center's ability to offer timely and accurate information can make the difference between life and death in many cases.

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Furthermore, the Northern New England Poison Center's educational outreach programs are vital in raising awareness about poison prevention and safe handling of potentially dangerous substances. These programs contribute to a safer environment for all Maine residents, particularly children and the elderly, who are most vulnerable to accidental poisonings. In addition to their primary role, the Northern New England Poison Center has demonstrated their ability to be nimble public health servants. They have effectively responded to various public health events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, arsenic contamination in well water, and PFAS contamination health issues. Their adaptability and expertise in these areas further underscore the importance of ensuring they have the necessary resources to continue their essential work.

I urge you to support LD 689 and ensure that the Northern New England Poison Center receives the funding it needs to continue its essential work. The health and safety of our community depend on it.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark J. Neavyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**Mark J Neavyn, MD, FACMT**

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