



Timothy Nangle
Senator, District 26

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Tim Nangle introducing
LD 689, "An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center."
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 12, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, as you know, I am Senator Tim Nangle, and I proudly represent Casco, Frye Island, Raymond, Windham, and part of Westbrook in the Maine Senate.

Having served as a 911 dispatcher, firefighter, police officer and paramedic, including as a Medcu Paramedic in Portland for 27 years, I know, firsthand, the value of poison center services. That's why I am proud to sponsor LD 689, "An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center."

The Northern New England Poison Center, based in Portland, Maine, has educational satellites in Concord, New Hampshire, and Burlington, Vermont. Its hotline, chat, and text services are available 24/7 for emergencies and inquiries. Nurses and pharmacists with national certification in poison management oversee the service, with credentialed physicians and doctor of pharmacy toxicologists available around the clock for complex cases.

The Center manages nearly 32,000 cases annually, requiring more than 35,000 additional calls to assist with more severe poisonings. While nearly half originate from Maine, the funding from the State of Maine is substantially less than that from New Hampshire or Vermont and is less than what it was 25 years ago. Due to the current nursing shortage, increased labor costs, and the growing complexity of poisonings, a significant and growing funding gap exists. MaineHealth currently fills the nearly \$1.3 million annual funding gap, but this is unsustainable.

And as our committee knows, Maine's EMS system is in crisis. Any unnecessary calls to 911 and dispatch of ambulances can negatively impact the care of others with greater need. One important function of the Poison Center is to prevent the unnecessary waste of health care dollars, and the use of health care providers and facilities that are already overburdened, including EMS. Many poisonings can be safely managed at home with careful assessment by specially trained Poison Center staff coupled with follow-up to ensure patient safety when necessary.

For example — and these are all real cases — a 2-year-old child swallowed super glue. Panicked parents called 911 and EMS was dispatched. On arrival, EMS contacted the Northern New England Poison Center. The Poison Center advised that this was not a serious concern, the child did not require a hospital evaluation and provided management assistance to the mother. EMS was able to go back into service for more serious cases. The Poison Center assisted the mother twice over the next couple of hours to ensure the child was eating, drinking well, and doing fine.



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A 54-year-old woman accidentally took more than double her insulin dose. EMS called the Poison Center from the scene. The patient's blood sugar was fine at that time, and she appeared well. Although insulin overdose can cause life-threatening effects, some cases can be managed safely at home under the proper circumstances. The Poison Center advised EMS that it was safe to monitor this patient at home with another adult present, a plan for eating to prevent low blood sugars, and the ability to monitor her blood sugar levels at home. The Poison Center followed up with the patient to ensure safety based on when the blood sugars were most likely to drop based on the type of insulin used.

A 1-year-old child ingested hand sanitizer. Her parent called 911, and they transferred her call to the Poison Center. The Poison Center nurse determined that the amount ingested would not be harmful and that an ambulance was not needed. The Poison Center provided information to the parent regarding what to watch for and what to do, then followed up later to ensure all was going well at home.

The Northern New England Poison Center saves well over \$13 for every dollar invested by safely managing cases at home whenever possible and improving care when referral to a health care facility is necessary. This can prevent unnecessary use of ambulances and hospitals already at capacity in our rural state and help patients get better more quickly so that they can leave the emergency department or hospital as soon as safely possible. In fact, studies have found that consulting Poison Center experts shortens the average length of stay in a hospital for poisoned patients by one to three days.

This is a necessary service that improves care while saving health care dollars. I hope you will join me in supporting LD 689, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim'.

Tim Nangle
State Senator, Senate District 26
Representing Casco, Frye Island, Raymond, Windham, and part of Westbrook