

"An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Crime of Endangering the Welfare of a Child"  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
Public Hearing Date: March 17, 2025  
Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 592

Good morning committee members,

My name is Camron Barrieau and I have been a police officer for 12 years. On November 15, 2021 at approximately 05:30 in the morning I was responding to a hit and run property damage crash in the town of Howland. This was around the time dispatch received a call of a 2-year-old experiencing difficulty breathing. I was only a few minutes away and responded to this.

I was familiar with this residence and knew that the people associated there were active drugs users. The grandmother of the 2-year-old girl met me in the driveway, screaming frantically to get in the house and help the 2-year-old girl. Knowing the history of the address, I asked if the young child had ingested drugs, and I was informed she had not. It is important to point out the serious nature of statements like these, when it involves a child possibly ingesting opiates that would induce an overdose, because seconds matter. I had life-saving NARCAN on me and could have easily saved the child with this.

Once I went inside, I located the 2-year-old laying on her back. The child's mother, was kneeling next to her trying to get her to wake up. The child was pale and turning blue in the face. The 2-year-old had ineffective breathing and all I could hear was a loud snoring sound coming from the child. I opened the child's eyelids to see if I could see constricted pupil. I am a drug recognition expert in the State of Maine and knew constricted pupil would have indicated the possible presence of narcotics. Her eyes were rolled towards the back of her head making it difficult for me to properly assess her pupil size. I started to sternum rub this 2-year-old girl and was calling out her name. The child would move slightly as if I was causing discomfort, but she would not wake up. Mom indicated that she gave this child candy earlier and was suggesting maybe this was a choking incident. Mom even showed me a Twix bar to suggest this was what she was choking on. I found it odd because nothing was missing off the candy. I wanted to believe mom, and did not want to think mom would let her own 2-year-old die when she knew full well, I had life-saving NARCAN with me. An EMT had arrived at this time and we opened the 2-year-old's mouth. I could not see anything.

EMS brought the child to the ambulance. I cannot think of a time I have felt more useless. I did not dare administer NARCAN because if the child was choking, I did not want to introduce more substances into the girl's airway. I am not a paramedic and I simply did not know what to do. I was terrified this kid was going to die and there was nothing I could do about it.

While EMS was performing life-saving measures and tried to identify what medical issues the young girl was experiencing, I continued to question the mother so we could save the child's life. The mother of the young child continued to state it was a choking incident. Finally, the mother mentioned she was unsure if a friend dropped drugs earlier in the day. From the time I had arrived and inquired about the possibility of drug ingestion to the statement there may be drugs involved, it was approximately 15 minutes, more than enough time for an overdose to become fatal. After learning of this, I informed EMS personnel the child was likely experiencing an overdose and to administer Narcan.

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A subsequent search of the mother's room, where the 2-year-old had been staying with mom, resulted in the seizure of suspected fentanyl and multiple items commonly used to ingest illegal drugs. All these items were in areas that would be easily accessed by a 2-year-old. The young girl was transported to the hospital, where a blood test would reveal fentanyl in her system. Thankfully, the 2-year-old girl survived this incident.

I am here to support LD 592. It bothers me to this day that a parent was gambling with her child's life. How anyone could experience an incident like this and not think this is felony level conduct, is beyond me. I am not here to insult or belittle anyone who has a drug addiction; instead, I am here to advocate for the children who experience situations like these. I deal with people with drug addiction almost every day. It is not everyday parents expose their children to fentanyl.

Thank you for your time,

Camron Barrieau