



City of Brewer Police Department

Senator Bebee-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Honorable Members of the Committee Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

This testimony is in support of the passage of LD 592, "An Act Amend the Laws Governing the Crime of Endangering the Welfare of a Child".

Maine law enforcement are experiencing incidents where young children are poisoned through contact with deadly drugs such as fentanyl. If treated with naloxone so the overdose is reversed our current statute for Endangering the Welfare of a Child only allows for a misdemeanor charge. This is a disproportionate offense for incidents that have a high likelihood of serious injury or death to a child.

We have encountered scenes where dangerous drugs such as fentanyl were in a toy box or on top of coffee tables or countertops easily within reach of young children. This represents a clear danger of poisoning. In the event of such a poisoning, even if medically reversed, there should be an appropriate level of crime to address such a horrible and preventable incident. We believe that the proposed changes in LD 592 provide this mechanism.

Fentanyl poisoning in children across the United States has been steadily increasing, according to a study published in the American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse there has been a 1,194.2% increase between 2015 and 2023 in nonfatal fentanyl exposure in children up to 19 years old.

According to a new study by Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine drug related infant deaths more than doubled in the United States from 2018 to 2022.

According to the Children's Safety Network:

- Between 2016 – 2019: 60% of unintentional poisoning deaths (ages 0-9) were drug poisoning, of which 53% related to opioids; 92% of unintentional poisoning deaths (ages 10-19) were drug poisoning, of which 58% were related to opioids.
- In 2020 drug poisoning was related to 73% of deaths ages 0-9, of which 54% involved opioids; and 96% of deaths in ages 10-19 were drug poisoning of which 73% were related to opioids.



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Drug endangered children are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution. As a result of such exposure, these children experience or are at high risk of experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; harm; or neglect.

The Maine Children's Ombudsman publishes annual reports on Child Welfare Services. The past few annual reports have clearly identified drug endangered children as being one of the greatest challenges.

We must have strong laws that advocate for the safety of children, who can't advocate for themselves. Drug endangered children are placed at risk by those entrusted to their care. The stakes to this are high, and if passed LD 592 can serve as an additional measure to help reverse this trend.

Respectfully submitted,

Deputy Chief Christopher M. Martin

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