



March 17th, 2025

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health & Human Services Committee.

My name is Maggie Zall, and I'm the Director of Southern Maine Harm Reduction Services with Maine Access Points. I am testifying today on behalf of Maine Access Points in opposition to LD 219, *An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange to a One-for-One Exchange*.

As a Syringe Access Program (SAP) certified by the Maine Center for Disease Control (CDC), Maine Access Points provides access to safe use supplies, harm reduction education, overdose education and prevention, and naloxone distribution to participants of our programs statewide, including our brick and mortar locations in York, Washington, and Oxford counties. In this role we are keenly aware of the impact LD 219 would have on people across the State of Maine, particularly our rural communities. Starting in November of last year, our York county location was the first and only certified SAP in the state of Maine to face the realities of having to return to a 1:1 model through a municipal ordinance, by the City of Sanford.

Based on decades of research, the federal CDC recommends distributing safe use supplies within a needs-based model, providing individuals with as many syringes and other sterile supplies as they need. Current regulation in the State of Maine follows what is known as 1:1+, which means a participant receives one new syringe for every one exchanged, plus 100 new syringes on top of that. In our York county SAP, we have seen the impacts of a 1:1 model, and the barriers they cause. We have first time participants not being able to obtain needed safe supplies, whether they have previously been hesitant to access this public health resource, have recently moved to the area, or have just been released from incarceration. Our participants need access to syringes to have on them because they are providing secondary distribution for their community who are unable to access the SAP, are dealing with increased scar tissue which requires more syringes than previously, or may not be able to carry used syringes for exchange due to being at risk of losing housing or fracturing family relationships. We know that when people utilize the same syringe multiple times, they highly increase their risk of bloodborne illness, cellulitis, and endocarditis. All of these are examples of the specific type of stigma that harm reduction models seek to avoid. We want participants to improve their health and wellbeing, including the multiple linkages to care we can offer.



There is salient and empirically proven evidence that needs-based SAPs decrease the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other bloodborne illnesses by providing access to these life-saving measures. Currently, Maine is facing an HIV cluster in the city of Bangor, with 22 individual cases of HIV since October 2023. All 22 people are people who inject drugs. Maine has the highest rate of new Hepatitis C infections in the nation since 2020, and 60% of newly diagnosed Hepatitis C infections were amongst people who injected drugs. SAPs are associated with roughly a 50% decrease in both HIV and HCV transmission. Additionally, the economic burden of increased emergency services and specialized treatment makes a 1:1 model financially irresponsible. These statistics speak to the absolute need to expand, not decrease, access to syringes.

We acknowledge community concerns regarding syringe litter, and agree that we want to keep all of our communities safe. Maine Access Points completes weekly syringe litter pickup, as well as providing syringe litter literacy to community partners. We have provided numerous potential solutions to municipal concerns, and remain dedicated to continued implementation of appropriate syringe litter pick up.

We call on you, our lawmakers, to vote unanimously Ought Not To Pass on this bill. Our experience as harm reduction providers solidifies our belief that when people who use drugs are given the tools and safety to properly dispose of their syringes, they do. We also have witnessed that when people who use drugs are given the resources to access syringes, there is a decrease in communicable disease and an increase in safety. We are highly motivated to remain in collaboration with our participants, communities, and municipal and state leadership, to continue to offer 1:1+. We request that you consider the bill currently proposed by Representative Rana regarding safe disposal of syringes to enhance this collaboration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, or if we can provide the committee with more information.

Sincerely,

Maine Access Points