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*Testimony of Representative Anne-Marie Mastraccio sponsoring*

## **LD 219, An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange Programs to a One-for-one Exchange**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Anne-Marie Mastraccio, and I represent House District 142, which includes part of the City of Sanford and the Village of Springvale. I am before you today to present **LD 219, An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange Programs to a One-for-one Exchange**.

This is not an anti-harm reduction bill, though you will most likely hear testimony to that effect today. I am a strong supporter of the need to offer harm reduction services in Sanford. As long as there are people who are sharing needles and putting themselves at risk for contracting life-threatening diseases, there is a need for these programs to exist. However, we value the public health of all Sanford residents, and this is our attempt to balance the needs of one group with the needs of the Sanford community at large.

Our city found that inappropriately discarded hypodermic syringes on public and private property within Sanford, and the presence of contaminated hypodermic syringes scattered across public parks and playgrounds, were exposing our children to the same viral and bacterial infections caused by needle sticks and exposure that harm reduction is designed to prevent.

Attempts were made to reconcile this one particular issue with Maine Access Points (MAP) and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (ME CDC), and when we could not come to a satisfactory agreement about the numbers of syringes to exchange, Sanford passed its own emergency ordinance last November that limits exchange numbers as allowed by Maine law. We believe the ordinance has reduced the number of discards greatly, and I have not heard of corresponding outbreaks of HIV or Hepatitis among the needle exchange population. In my opinion, without this local action to limit the number of needles exchanged, harm reduction

services in Sanford would have been severely limited, if not curtailed entirely. The choice was made by the City Council to preserve harm reduction services for the approximately 500 individuals serviced in Sanford. They believe the ordinance, which was made permanent on March 4th, has in fact helped to reduce the large numbers of needles previously found around the city.

The one-for-one syringe exchange worked well in Maine for many years and I am appreciative that when the law was changed in the 130th Legislature, this committee saw fit to allow for some local control. However, we spent countless staff hours trying to remedy a problem not of our making, and it created a negative political dialogue that was not helpful for the very people harm reduction was designed to aid. That is why I brought this bill forward.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to the work session and discussion.