



TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.
LD 1024 – Ought Not to Pass

**An Act to Expand the List of Crimes That Do Not Qualify for
Immunity Under Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-
related Medical Assistance**

Joint Standing Committee on
Criminal Justice and Public Safety

PO Box 7860
Portland, ME 04112

(207) 774-5444
ACLUMaine.org
@ACLUMaine

March 31, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am the policy director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to oppose LD 1024, a bill that will cost lives and reinforce failed methods of addressing problematic drug use.

Our state continues to struggle with the question of how to address problematic drug use. Maine has made significant progress with harm reduction efforts championed by public health advocates, including increased availability of naloxone, and public education campaigns, but we are still losing too many people to deadly overdoses. In 2022, when the legislature passed the strongest Good Samaritan law in the country, lawmakers took a decisive step in the right direction.¹ Legislators made a clear statement that they valued saving lives more than punishing people for a health condition. The bill before you would roll back this essential progress.

Criminal punishment cannot and has not ended problematic drug use or the availability of increasingly strong street drugs. States and the federal government have tried the same failed policies of the War on Drugs for half a century. Continuing to expand criminal penalties for drug possession and sale has done nothing to reduce drug use, dependence, or availability in Maine over the last 20 years. Instead, expanded criminalization has directed valuable resources away from evidence-based solutions that reduce drug use, such as drug treatment and social support, and into the criminal legal system. We continue to spend exorbitant amounts of money punishing

¹ 17-A M.R.S. § 1111-B.



Maine

people, but our communities are no safer or healthier for it. Additionally, this approach has fueled mass incarceration and torn communities apart, particularly communities of color and rural communities.

We urge you to continue the work of the 130th legislature and prioritize saving lives, instead of criminally punishing people in the middle of a medical emergency. If you pass this bill, more people will be afraid to call 9-1-1 because that call for help may become a call for prosecution. Make no mistake: if you roll back the expanded Good Samaritan law, more people will die. For those Good Samaritans who do choose to call 9-1-1 and stay at the scene rendering aid, we will revert to punishing them despite their life-saving work.

We must not go back on the promise to all Maine people that their lives are valuable and that they deserve care, not punishment. We urge you to reject this bill.