

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1024

Rosie Boyce | Lewiston, Maine

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee – March 31st, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Rosie Boyce, I live in Lewiston & am a lifelong resident of Androscoggin County. I'm an organizer with the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project, and I am a woman in long term remission from chaotic IV drug use. I'm what some might call "system impacted", having survived years tied up in both the carceral and child protective systems in this state. Today I proudly identify as a Mother, an advocate, & a Harm Reductionist.

I'm here today to speak in strong opposition to LD 1024.

Let's start with the facts: 911 calls are up, and overdose deaths are down. That tells us the Good Samaritan Law is working. The law, as it stands, is saving lives. It is doing what it was intended to do—creating enough safety amongst those whom need it most, so those same people feel they can call 911 for help without first wrestling with the ghastly determination of who's life is worth more?

And yet here we are again, entertaining a bill that would strip away that safety by expanding the list of crimes that make someone ineligible for protection. I cannot say this more clearly: this will cost lives. Fear is still a major factor in whether someone calls for help. This bill would only deepen that fear and send a chilling message across our communities—especially to people who use drugs and those who love them—that if you reach out in a moment of crisis, the cost for some is their freedom, while others wind up paying with their life.

We need to name what this bill really is: a return to carceral logic in the middle of a public health emergency. If this state were suffering from a shortage of prosecutions, maybe this conversation would look different. But unless someone from the DEA or the sheriff's department can present data proving otherwise, I have to point out what everyone on the ground already knows: Maine is not lacking for arrests. Every jail in the state is overcrowded.

The narrative that Maine is "losing ground on public safety" is just not backed by facts. If every jail is full, then what this state has is not a shortage of convictions—it's a crisis of over-incarceration.

There is no short supply when it comes to inmates.

In Androscoggin County, people are sitting in jail for **over a year** without access to their constitutionally protected right to a fair and speedy trial because there simply aren't enough public defenders to process the surge in # of inmates. The criminal legal system is already in crisis. **LD 1024 doesn't fix that**—it promises only to ***exacerbate an already out of control problem***.

Why must we go from one crisis to the next? We finally start to get a handle on the overdose epidemic, and offer not only sound but humane solutions, just to turn around with yet another attempt to gut what has become known as the ***gold standard*** across the country.

Please do not forget that Maine currently sets the bar for the entire country, with **the strongest good Samaritan law** our nation has ever seen. Americans, all across the country, recognize what an extraordinary feat it was to enact the **GOODSAM** expansion in 2022. So, *why can't we?*

I want to close with a name: **Xavier Berry**. He was a youth I worked with doing street outreach in Lewiston. He had just turned 18—only six days into legal adulthood—when he died, left alone in an abandoned apartment building. The people he was with didn't call for help. They were afraid. Maybe afraid of warrants. Maybe afraid of being charged. Maybe afraid of laws just like the one you're considering today.

Xavier was one of the happiest kids I've ever had the honor of working with. He wanted to belong & he longed for a family. He wanted love. And instead, he died alone. That is the cost of fear. That is the cost of criminalizing care.

This bill isn't just misguided—it's dangerous. This bill reinforces carceral power over public health and would interrupt a working system rooted in care and trust.

I urge this committee to *Please reject LD 1024*. Let's protect what's working. Let's continue to choose life. Let's continue to choose care. This is the cost of saving lives.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.