



Maine Medical
Association



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**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND
THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

In Support Of

LD 1646 - An Act to Amend Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Regarding Suspected
Drug-related Overdoses

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Room 436, Cross Building, Augusta, Maine
Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Lani Graham, MD, MPH. I am a physician and the former chief public health officer for Maine. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1646, An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes, on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing more than 4,300 allopathic and osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State. The MMA and MOA's legislative committees have joined to advocate with one voice.

We have all determined that testifying in support of LD 1646 is vital because its passage is vital in Maine's continuing effort to reduce the terrible death toll drug addiction takes each and every year. We believe it is critical to our work on this issue, which includes the 1000 Lives Campaign at the Maine Medical Association, whose goal is to reduce opioid-related deaths in Maine by 1000 from current predictions over a 5-year span.¹

An overdose is a medical emergency in which seconds matter. Early signs of a life-threatening overdose—confusion, extreme sedation, abnormal or slowed breathing, cyanosis, or inability to awaken—are often frightening and ambiguous to bystanders. In

¹ <https://mainephysicians.org/1000-lives-campaign-for-maine/>

these moments, people describe what they see; they do not make diagnoses or speak in legal terms. Expecting precise language during a crisis is neither realistic nor medically sound.

Unfortunately, overdose emergencies are not rare or isolated events in Maine. In 2024 alone, there were 8,535 overdoses reported statewide, and 2,069 required an EMS response. Many Mainers, friends, neighbors, or family members, each year must decide, in real time, whether to call for help. When legal protection hinges on the use of specific words, confusion and hesitation are inevitable—and delay can be fatal. Brain injury from hypoxia can begin within minutes; death can follow shortly thereafter.

Maine's Good Samaritan Law was enacted to address this exact problem by reducing fear of arrest and encouraging timely calls to 911. Evidence shows this approach works. A 2020 study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found a nationwide pattern of lower opioid-related overdose death rates among states that enacted Good Samaritan laws, both compared to death rates prior to a law's enactment and death rates in states without such laws.² We celebrated this success.

The January 2025 decision in *State v. Beaulieu* introduced uncertainty by suggesting that a call for a general "medical event" may not qualify for Good Samaritan protection. From a medical perspective, this ambiguity is dangerous. People in crisis should not have to pause to choose legally precise language while someone is struggling to breathe.

LD 1646 resolves this problem by aligning the law with medical reality. It clarifies that Good Samaritan protections apply when someone seeks help for a person showing signs or symptoms of a drug-related overdose, even if the caller does not explicitly say "overdose." Clear standards benefit everyone—callers, 911 dispatchers, EMTs, and law enforcement—by allowing responders to focus on care rather than criminalization.

As overdose deaths have begun to decline in recent years, it is critical that Maine not roll back or weaken the protections that have helped save lives. On behalf of Maine's physicians, I urge you to support LD 1646.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Lani Graham, MD, MPH

² <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-248-highlights.pdf>