

January 7, 2026

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Testimony of Representative Michel Lajoie in Support of
LD 1646: An Act to Amend Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Regarding Suspected Drug-related
Overdoses

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Good Afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and my esteemed colleagues of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. I am Representative Michel Lajoie, and I represent House District 96, which includes a portion of Lewiston. I am here today as a proud co-sponsor of LD 1646, sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross.

This bill is about one thing and one thing only: saving lives. During the 130th Legislature, Democrats, Republicans, advocates, first responders, and people with lived experience came together to strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Law amidst an overdose crisis. The purpose of the Good Samaritan Law has always been clear: to ensure people call for help without fear. It was never meant to be a legal puzzle or a test of whether someone uses the "right" words in a moment of panic.

I speak to you not only as a legislator, but as someone who spent more than 31 years with the City of Lewiston Fire Department, including time as Fire Chief. From my professional experience, I can tell you that during emergencies people do not speak in legal language. They speak in fear. They speak in urgency. They speak to save someone they love.

When someone calls 911 because a person may be experiencing an overdose, the focus must be on immediate care. The public needs to know that no "magic words" are required to receive immunity protections. LD 1646 restores the original intent of the Good Samaritan Law by making clear that protections apply when someone calls for help for a person showing signs of a drug-related overdose, regardless of whether or not the caller uses the word "overdose." This clarity allows everyone on scene to focus on saving a life, not navigating legal uncertainty.

The urgency is real, even in my own community. According to the Maine Drug Data Report¹ published in October 2025, 26 Lewiston residents were among the suspected and confirmed fatal overdoses statewide in 2024. From January through October 2025, that number has already reached 27. Every fatal overdose is a family forever changed and a loss to a community.

Every life is worth saving. LD 1646 reaffirms Maine's commitment to compassion, clarity, and common sense. I urge you to support this bill. Our neighbors' lives are at stake.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ https://mainedrugdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-10-ME_OD_Report-Final.pdf