

7 January 2026

Testimony of the Maine Green Independent Party LD 1646 Good Samaritan bill OTP

Good afternoon, Chairs Sen Anne Beebe-Center and Rep. Tabis Hasenfus and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I'm sorry not to be with you in person, but with heavy snowfall, I am unable to travel from the Western Mountains, so thank you for continuing to foster accessibility by allowing public testimony via Zoom.

My name is Kelly Merrill and I live in Stratton, Maine. I am here in my capacity as the Co-Chair of the Maine Green Independent Party, which has 37K members statewide. We fully support LD 1646 "An Act to Amend Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Regarding Suspected Drug-related Overdoses."

We know how powerful Maine's Good Samaritan Law is as a life-saving measure. One study attributed a 15% reduction in deaths to a combination of such laws where there is robust naloxone access, such as here in our state. And continuing to strengthen Good Sam Laws only continues to educate Maine's law enforcement partners, who are needed to ensure their effective application.

As everyone in this state knows, Maine has historically been one of the hardest hit places in the country as far as the overdose epidemic is concerned, peaking mid-pandemic in 2022 with 723 deaths. But for 3 consecutive years since, overdose deaths have fallen. It's not one measure that is responsible for this, but all of the measures we have supported to mitigate the loss of our people.

I'd like to take a moment to review the numbers. From 2022 to 2023, the number of overdose deaths fell dramatically from their peak of 723 souls in 2022 to 606 in 2023. That's 117 less deaths, just over 16%. From 2023 to 2024 the number of deaths went from 606 to 490. That's 116 less overdose deaths, an over 19% reduction. And projected numbers for 2025 demonstrate the same trend. We anticipate those numbers will be below 400, so let's just say 395, which would be 95 less overdose deaths, again, over 19%.

What we are doing is working.

Help us contribute that trend and save lives. We urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1646 to strengthen Maine's Good Sam Law.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly F. Merrill
Co-Chair, Maine Green Independent Party