

Ryan Paige
Maine Recovery Advocacy Project

Dear Senator Desambault, Representative Warren and esteemed members of the criminal justice and public safety committee.

My name is Ryan Paige and I am an organizer with Maine Recovery Advocacy Project. I am also a person in long term recovery with lived experience in respect to being a person that suffered with Substance Use Disorder while incarcerated.

I would like to first acknowledge that the access to and understanding of the need for the treatment of substance use disorder has made considerable strides forward since my incarceration in 2004. At that time treatment “options” were limited to a meeting held by members of Alcoholics Anonymous that would come into the jail. There was no talk of any other treatment options from any of the staff, correctional or medical, at that time. Furthermore any discussion from correctional staff was stigmatizing and dehumanizing. For example I recall a corrections officer referring to the AA meetings as “junkies anonymous”

Though options seemed to have expanded to include the use of the Medication Assisted Treatment Suboxone, the climate has not followed. There are so many evidenced based options for treatment of Substance use disorder that are not only not offered but outright excluded. Not to mention that the conditions that need to be met to acquire these life saving treatment options are nearly impossible to meet for a person coming into the department of corrections that is still in active use. This policy failure recently contributed to the loss of a human life . One that I believe could have been saved had there been adequate and accessible treatment options available.

I agree that we have done something but it's not enough.
We can do better. We need to do better. We are failing our communities and these failures are costing human lives.

I write today in support of LD 663 because I believe that there are as many pathways to treatment as there are people that suffer with the disease of addiction and those pathways need to be offered and communicated in a compassionate manner.

I ask you to please support this bill because treatment saves lives.. It saved mine .

Thank you for your time. I would love to answer any questions you may have .