



Dear Senator Deshabault, Representative Warren, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Wendy Allen. I am the Young Adult Diversion Program and Policy & Advocacy Lead for the Restorative Justice Institute of Maine. I am also a woman in long term recovery from substance use disorder. I am here today in support of LD 1862, An act to Expand the Good Samaritan Law in Maine, on behalf of Restorative Justice Institute of Maine.

As an organization, we believe that reducing harm within our communities is what makes for a stronger community. With the Good Samaritan Law as it is today, people are still dying due to fear of calling for help. Lives that could have been saved if only those present at the scene of an overdose felt safe that the law would protect them from going to jail or picking up new charges. So many people have endured the harm from calling for help in these situations that no one wants to do it anymore. No one should have to make decisions like that.

From experience, most times when someone is in a house full of people using substances, there are conversations around what to do and what not to do in case an event like this happens, the end result is DO NOT CALL 911. Why are we letting down our people that we are supposed to be protecting? By expanding this law, we can provide the safe haven of picking up the phone for help and having the feeling of security doing it, while saving the life of someone we care about. This could be your son, daughter, niece, nephew or someone you love, or maybe even you. This disorder doesn't discriminate. We are in the realms of a drug apocalypse, losing many members of our community each week.

It is a miracle that I am here today speaking with you all about this important issue. During active use, I overdosed 5 times in a 8 hour period, no one called 911 for assistance due to fear. I was given naloxone and left in the house alone to die. I kept overdosing due to the amount of heroin that I had consumed and the naloxone wearing off, allowing the drug to absorb back into my brain repeatedly, not because I was using more drugs. I woke up alone, confused, scared and sick. I needed medical assistance, but instead, fear of the police actions caused the ones in the house to administer naloxone and leave the residence.

There are many other examples of why we need this bill to pass, unfortunately their voices can no longer be heard. Travis Kelleher, the "soup man's" son, a brother, father and loving friend, a man known to me as a brother-in-law, left in his home alone to die. Ashley Coffman, a mother, sister, loving member of her community and friend, who died while her friend that called for help was getting arrested at the scene, and the list goes on for miles. Why should anyone have to fear going to jail and prison while trying to save a life? Maine says they are for their people, so we at RJIM are asking you in great respect to vote to pass this life saving bill, and be for the people of Maine.

Thank you for your time,

Wendy Allen

Restorative Justice Institute of Maine

wallen@rjimaine.org

(207)291-6617