



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Lydia V. Crafts

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Good Morning Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am Representative Lydia Crafts from House District 90. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1862 “An Act To Strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance.”

I am a bill cosponsor and I'm also a Mainer directly affected by the opioid crisis. I lost a loved one in September 2021 to an overdose. There are 635 other Maine families who also lost their loved ones in 2021. While my grief and pain are unique to my own loss, the loss of our families, friends, and neighbors is no longer unique in Maine and across our nation. Many, if not most, of us have been directly affected by addiction. In addition to the 636 overdose fatalities this year, there were approximately 10,000 nonfatal overdoses in 2021. These numbers undeniably point to a real and growing epidemic that knows no limits.

As my family put the pieces together after my cousin's death, we learned that he was recently connected with folks who had just gotten out of prison on drug charges and were on probation. At the time of his overdose, people went in search of Narcan and others cleaned up the scene. They would spend the next two hours making a futile attempt at picking up the pieces, meanwhile my cousin would die. Had they not worried about their probation violations, about cleaning up their drugs and paraphernalia, and about getting the person who provided the drugs off the premises, perhaps they would have called emergency services sooner. Lifesaving aid in the form of Narcan is readily available when law enforcement and emergency responders

District 90 Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro (part) South Bristol (part) and Monhegan Plantation, plus the unorganized territory of Louds Island



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arrive at an overdose. Perhaps removing all of their fears, all of their inhibitions about calling 9-1-1, and the threat of compounded legal action could have led those folks to make a different call. Perhaps my cousin would be here today. LD 1862 gives us an opportunity to do things differently; it gives us the possibility to save lives.

I can understand that this proposal is difficult to imagine for some people listening today. There's evidence that this proposal will work and I'd like to share what I know. As a licensed clinical social worker, I run a therapeutic behavior program. The focus of my daily work is based on human behavior change. I treat primarily elementary aged children with extremely challenging and unsafe behavior. In this line of work we know from decades of research that punishment procedures (trying to decrease negative behaviors) are not nearly as effective as reinforcement procedures (strengthening desirable behaviors). In my day job, I keep my attention continually focused on strengthening the behaviors I want to see more of because study after study indicates that greater improvement results from reinforcing the behaviors we want to see more of.

In the case of LD 1862, we've identified the need to increase the frequency that people request help from emergency services at the time of an overdose. We want them to call 9-1-1 and do it quickly. If we want to use punishment procedures, we could make it a crime NOT to call. But we know, again relying on research over decades of close study, that this would be an ineffective intervention. Instead, and like this bill suggests, I would ask this committee to consider how we might strengthen or reinforce the behavior we want to see increase. We know



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that people don't call often and soon enough and one of the primary reasons given is because of legal repercussions. Evidence would indicate that if people are protected from prosecution when emergency personnel respond to the scene of an overdose, they will be more likely to call again in the future. This process, along with a strong public education campaign is set to save the lives of thousands of Mainers.

Please join me today in supporting LD 1862 and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lydia Crafts".

Lydia Crafts
State Representative