

Elizabeth Jaeger  
SURRY  
LD 1862

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren , and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: my name is Liz Jaeger I am a resident of Surry and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1862.

No one should be afraid to call 9-1-1 in the case of a medical emergency. Unfortunately, this is happening here in Maine where a dozen people are dying every week due to drug overdose. This is wrong and we can do better.

I volunteer at a Syringe Service Program where we provide free supplies to people who use drugs so that they can be safer, reduce the spread of illness, access recovery support if they want it, and acquire life-saving Naloxone. I teach people every day how to administer Naloxone and send them out into the world to save the lives of those who are in danger of a drug overdose.

In the training I tell people the most important step in reversing an overdose is to call 9-1-1 because even after successfully administering Naloxone a person can fall back into overdose, or may need other medical assistance.

Sadly, many of those who I train and who report utilizing Naloxone say that they are afraid to call for help because they fear that they or another bystander may face criminal charges related to the substances present. They are afraid to lose their housing, their jobs, their children or to face prison time. This fear of criminalization keeps people from making a call for emergency medical assistance that could save a life.

The people I meet, some of whom are substance users and some of whom are just friends or family to those who use, want to help but they will not call 911.

Maine needs to strengthen our existing Good Samaritan laws to protect anyone present at the scene of an overdose from prosecution for non-violent crimes. We have an opportunity to do this now with the proposed LD 1862 An Act to Strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Laws and I urge you to support this measure to end preventable overdose deaths.

Thank you.