

Senator Susan Deschambault, Representative Charlotte Warren and Honorable Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Service, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Patty Kidder and I live in the village of Springvale located in the city of Sanford. I am writing to you as a person of faith, to speak to you in favor of LD 1862 - An Act To Strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance.

As a Unitarian Universalist, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and in Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We need to expand the scope of our current Good Samaritan Law so that EVERYONE feels safe to call 911 whenever there's a medical emergency, especially involving a drug-related overdose. We have the ability to reverse an Opioid overdose and save a person's life if the EMTs can get there in time and every minute counts. We need to remove all of the barriers, both real and perceived, that slows down someone's reaction to call 911 for help. No one should be worrying about what will happen to them legally because they choose to call 911 for medical assistance in a life & death situation. We are losing 12 of our friends, family members and neighbors to a preventable overdose every week and this law can help reduce that number as it would ensure that everyone feels safe to call 911.

The fear of criminalization makes it hard to call 911 and makes recovery from substance use even harder. We all agree that the stigma attached to substance use disorder is a problem and it makes recovery harder. One of the biggest factors creating stigma is the criminalization of people who use drugs. The fear of criminalization makes it harder to call 911. And the stigma of criminalization has real effects on people's access to: Housing, Employment and a College Education.

Most landlords conduct criminal background checks and can deny housing based on any criminal conviction and federal housing assistance programs are required to deny applicants who have been evicted from public housing within the past 3 years for drug-related reasons.

On an employment application people must "check the box" if they have ever been convicted of a crime on many job applications. Unfortunately, job applicants with a criminal record are 50 percent less likely to receive a call-back from submitting a job application.

If a person is convicted for possession or sale of drugs for conduct that occurred while the person was enrolled in school, the person becomes ineligible for future federal student loans.

I look forward to a time when society stops treating people who suffer from substance use disorder as criminals and we give them the love and understanding necessary for them to seek treatment and recovery. For many, information about access to treatment is received after surviving an overdose and we need to do whatever we can to keep them alive until they are ready to take the long road to recovery.

As a long-time member of the Sanford Unitarian Universalist Church and MPA (Maine Peoples' Alliance), I hope you will all vote in favor of LD 1862 - An Act To Strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance. Thank you for your time.

Patty Kidder
4 Carpenter St., Springvale, ME 04083-1109 207-502-9667 (C)