

Mikki Rice
Freeman Township
Testimony for LD 1862
In Support
02/09/2022

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

Expanding the Good Samaritan Law will help save lives at a time when we are losing record numbers of people to overdose. We are losing 2 people a day to overdose here in Maine. You can do something to change that though, so that next year we aren't looking at over 700 or 800 deaths.

Research shows that states that have strong Good Samaritan Laws in place have lower rates of overdose and although Maine does have a Good Samaritan Law on the books, it doesn't go far enough to alleviate fears of calling for help in the event of an overdose. This is evidenced by the fact that the overdose death rates continue to increase in Maine at a staggering rate. Even though the law was passed in 2019.

Last year, overdose deaths increased by TWENTY PERCENT in Maine. According to researchers the reason for the increase in overdose deaths is due to fentanyl being in the drug supply without the user's knowledge and it's not just Heroin that they are adding it to anymore. It's getting put in cocaine and other drugs as well.

We all want people to have a viable pathway to recovery when they are ready and want it. But I also want people who are in active use to be safe and ALIVE. Someone in active use is in no way less worthy of services than someone in recovery and dead people don't recover.

We are at a point in history where it is time to make a decision. Do we listen to the research and the experts in the medical field that drug use is a symptom of a larger problem that we should be treating, not criminalizing? Or do we ignore the research and continue to charge people with petty crimes and continue to lose people left and right, because people are too scared to call for help?

We are losing way too many people to overdose and I don't want to be sitting here next year while 800 people are dead!. You all have the power to do something about it.

The answer is pretty clear to me. We have every reason to pass LD 1862 and no reason not to!

I implore you to do the right thing. This bill in no way encourages people to use drugs. It encourages people to call for help when they do use drugs and end up getting a deadly dose of Fentanyl in their supply. The first steps of ending the discrimination against people who use drugs is to start showing the world that people who use drugs don't deserve to be prosecuted for their unhealthy coping mechanisms.

The current way isn't working either or else we wouldn't be losing more and more people every year!! Let's do something about it. Let's Save Lives!

PS. I also think that the state should do a Public Service Campaign to inform Mainers of the existence of a Good Samaritan Law.