



Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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March 2, 2022

The Honorable Susan Deschambault
Chair, Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

The Honorable Charlotte Warren
Chair, Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: NNESAM's Support for LD 1862, An Act To Strengthen Maine's Good Samaritan Laws
Concerning Drug-related Medical Assistance

Dear Chair Deschambault and Chair Warren,

On behalf of the Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine (NNESAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, who specialize in the prevention, treatment, and recovery from addiction, we write to express our support for LD 1862. This important legislation would expand Good Samaritan legal protections to all individuals present at the scene of an overdose, barring any violent crimes.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented overdose crisis. In 2021, Maine experienced an estimated 23% annual increase in overdose deaths, surpassing the grim milestone of most deaths in any year on record.ⁱ To mitigate this deepening crisis, we must enhance every tool at our disposal. Good Samaritan legal protections for all parties present during an overdose are one of these tools that will save lives. An evidence-based harm reduction strategy, Good Samaritan protections are proven effective in reducing overdose mortality. Research indicates that the adoption of these laws are associated with an 11% reduction in opioid overdose deaths.ⁱⁱ Additionally, Good Samaritan protections are particularly effective at limiting harms to African-American communities, with Good Samaritan protections associated with a 26% decrease in opioid-overdose deaths in those communities.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, an emergency services response to an opioid overdose can serve as an opportunity to provide ongoing medical care and addiction treatment.^{iv}

While Maine's existing Good Samaritan laws protect the individual who reports the overdose and the individual overdosing themselves, they fail to account for others present at the scene. As a result, bystanders may be hesitant to get involved for fear of potential criminal consequences to

follow from interactions with law enforcement. LD 1862 would remedy this glaring limitation by extending Good Samaritan protections to all individuals present at the scene, with exceptions made for violent crimes. Critically, this legal protection extends to those with parole or conditions of release violations, which often prevent individuals intervening in these circumstances.

By removing disincentives for individuals to assist in treating overdoses, LD 1862 would strengthen the state's response to the overdose epidemic and increase connections to treatment. LD 1862's sponsors acknowledge the scale of the overdose crisis and understand that responding to an overdose—and potentially saving a life—is a full community effort. As such, individuals should not be discouraged from getting involved for fear of future legal consequences. For these reasons, NNESAM strongly supports LD 1862 and requests that your committee favorably report this crucial bill.

NNESAM stands ready to assist the legislature in addressing the overdose crisis. Please do not hesitate to contact me at molly.e.rossignol@gmail.com or (603 703-6253) if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Molly E. Rossignol, DO, FASAM
President, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine

CC:

The Honorable Dan Costain
The Honorable Scott Wryway
The Honorable Mark Lawrence
The Honorable Grayson Lookner
The Honorable Victoria Morales
The Honorable Dan Newman
The Honorable Richard Pickett
The Honorable William Pluecker
The Honorable Lois Reckitt
The Honorable Shelley Rudnicki
The Honorable Braden Sharpe

ⁱ State of Maine & University of Maine. (2022). Measuring the Drug Epidemic and Response in Maine. Maine Drug Data Hub.

ⁱⁱ Rees, D. I., Sabia, J. J., Argys, L. M., Latshaw, J., & Dave, D. (2017). With a little help from my friends: The effects of naloxone access and Good Samaritan laws on opioid-related deaths. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

ⁱⁱⁱ McClellan, C., Lambdin, B. H., Ali, M. M., Mutter, R., Davis, C. S., Wheeler, E., Pemberton, M., & Kral, A. H. (2018). Opioid-overdose laws association with opioid use and overdose mortality. *Addictive Behaviors*, 86, 90–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.03.014>

^{iv} <https://www.asam.org/advocacy/public-policy-statements/details/public-policy-statements/2021/08/09/use-of-naloxone-for-the-prevention-of-drug-overdose-deaths>