

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Stephanie Vierkant and I am a resident at Southern Maine Women's Re-Entry Center. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1862.

I am writing in favor of this bill because I lost my son Domanic on January 13, 2020, at 20 years old to a preventable overdose. I was incarcerated at the time. He was 3 days out of rehab and was at my sister's house and on the phone with a friend that he used with previously. According to the texts on his phone, the police told us that he had told her 4 times "no," that he didn't want to use or be around them because he was sober and was trying to stay that way.

Finally, he did say yes. He went to see her and used substances and returned to my sister's house. That's when he overdosed in his room alone. My niece who was raised with him found him a couple of hours later. The police were called and there was an investigation.

My sister tried to press charges on the woman that the texts were from, but I wrote to the district attorney in Massachusetts and told her that as his mother I would rather not see 2 children lost to this disease and 2 families without a child, I would rather her not get an involuntary manslaughter charge and get the help she needed as a substance user.

Because of this, they allowed her not to receive any criminal charges and ordered a 90-day rehab and treatment after to get help for herself. This is how it should be for anyone asking for and needing help. As someone who lost a child to an accidental overdose, I do not believe that people who provide the drugs should be charged with the deaths. They should be provided with help.

Please support this bill and help people feel safe to save lives. It is crucial. Again, we are losing so many lives every day, every week, every year. This will help save lives. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions I am happy to answer them.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Vierkant