



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of LD 1364

**An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing
Safe Consumption Sites**

Sponsored by Representative Lookner

4.27.2023

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Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a Westbrook resident, and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's safety net community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1364, "An Act to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths by Establishing Safe Consumption Sites." According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation, "Harm reduction is critical to keeping people who use drugs alive and as healthy as possible, and is a key pillar in the multi-faceted Health and Human Services' Overdose Prevention Strategy." I would like to thank Representative Lookner for bringing this bill forward.

Last year, 716 people died from preventable overdoses, and hundreds more died from complications related to non-sterile equipment for substance consumption and Maine's inconsistent, contaminated drug supply. There has never been a fatal overdose in any of the over 120 existing Safe Consumption Sites, anywhere in the world, ever. The bottom line is that Safe Consumption Sites save lives because they are reacting to the world we live in – not to the world they wished we lived in.

Centers have been implemented in countries all over the world since the 1980s and have had a proven positive impact on the community. Research shows that centers connect people to treatment and recovery support services and bridge gaps in healthcare for people who use drugs.

Each year in our state the number of accidental overdose deaths rises. And you all – and your colleagues before you – have spent a lot of time trying to create solutions for the problem. Yet, the numbers still rise. And each one of those deaths is someone's child, one of our community members – a Mainer. The proposal in front of you today has a 100% effectiveness rate for saving lives. Again, there has never been a fatal overdose in any of the over 120 existing Safe Consumption Sites, anywhere in the world, ever. There is no single answer to the overdose crisis, but this is another important step on the way towards turning the tide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Alliance today. I respectfully urge you to support this common-sense proposal to save the lives of our fellow Mainers.