



Neither For Nor Against L.D. 2054

Wednesday, January 17th, 2024

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Courtney Gary-Allen. I am the Organizing Director of the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP), a bipartisan grassroots network dedicated to addressing substance use issues in Maine through community-driven and policy-based solutions. During the 130th Legislative Session, our network played a pivotal role in drafting, debating, and passing the expansion of the good Samaritan law.

Today, I am here to provide testimony regarding L.D. 2054: An Act to Exclude Certain Operating Under the Influence Crimes from the Immunity Provisions Triggered When Law Enforcement Is Called for a Suspected Overdose. This proposed legislation aims to add operating under the influence (OUI) and operating or attempting to operate a watercraft, snowmobile, and all-terrain vehicle under the influence to the list of crimes that do not qualify for immunity in drug-related overdose situations.

While we neither endorse nor oppose L.D. 2054, we emphasize the importance of considering the potential unintended consequences of adding any crime to the list applicable at the scene of an overdose. Our involvement in crafting the good Samaritan law during the previous legislative session and our lived experience has taught us to approach each addition to this law with caution. The primary concern is that expanding the list of chargeable offenses will discourage individuals from seeking help, leading to overdose deaths.

I urge the committee to thoroughly evaluate the implications and potential repercussions of this legislation, taking into account both the severity of OUI and the critical need to encourage prompt responses to overdose emergencies. Striking a balance between addressing criminal conduct and saving lives is paramount for the well-being of our communities.

I bring to the committee's attention the consideration that, while OUI may warrant inclusion, we have doubts about the necessity of adding operating a watercraft, snowmobile, or ATV to the list. Additionally, we express strong opposition to any potential amendments seeking to include more crimes in the chargeable offenses at the scene of an overdose and request inclusion in the work session if any amendments are to be considered.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am happy to answer any questions.

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