

Mikki Rice
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Testimony in Support
LD 1315: An Act to Require Instruction in Schools on
Substance Abuse Prevention and Administration of Naloxone Hydrochloride.

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Mikki Rice, I am a person in abstinence based recovery for Opioid Use Disorder, I am the daughter of a mother who is in recovery from Opioid Use Disorder, I am the wife of someone who is in recovery from OUD, and I am the mom of 2 boys aged 12 and 15 who have a predisposition to being diagnosed with a mental illness sometime in their lives, which in turn increases their risk of a SUD. I am testifying today in support of LD 1315 An Act to Require Instruction in Schools on Substance Abuse Prevention and Administration of Naloxone Hydrochloride. I would also like to add some amendments.

When I was in school D.A.R.E. was all the rage. A cop would come into my classroom and tell us how bad drugs were for us and then would teach us how to "Just Say No" like it was just that easy. Like peer pressure and peer pressure alone was the reason why people all across the world have used substances for centuries and still do to this day (many of them without ever developing a dependence).

D.A.R.E. taught me that if a family member had a SUD I was more likely to have a SUD as well, IF I made that first decision to try drugs, and if I made that decision I was doomed, because the only way to not get addicted to drugs was to not use drugs.. It never taught me that I had a higher chance of developing a dependence because my father died when I was 2, because my step father was abusive, because I was severely bullied at school or because I later would be diagnosed with bi polar disorder. It never taught me that I would want to use alcohol so that I didn't have social anxiety and could actually talk to people. They didn't teach me that I could take a prescription medication and get hooked to it because it gave me a feeling of happiness and euphoria that at that point in my life I couldn't find anywhere else. No, instead it taught me that the only way to not become dependent was abstinence. Well what about those of us who were already using substances or would in the future? What could we do after we had already broken the cardinal rule?

I tell you this because I am 100% in support of evidence based, accurate, compassionate and comprehensive harm reduction based curriculum being taught in Maine schools and I am 100% in support of teaching overdose education and naloxone administration in Maine high schools. Unfortunately this bill doesn't guarantee that students will get the type of substance use education that leads to decreased drug use among teens and includes those that are already using substances.

There is a large body of evidence that evidence based curriculum that covers:

- Information on the ways in which drug use can be a mechanism for dealing with mental health issues (especially stress) and teach alternative coping mechanisms.
- Information about how different substances affect the brain and body (especially the adolescent brain)
- Factors that contribute to physical and mental dependence to substances
- Accurate information about the harms associated with drug use (including harms of possible Criminal Justice Involvement) and harm reduction strategies that can empower youth to make healthiest choices available to them.
- Comprehensive information on current substances available to teens (marijuana, tobacco, vaping/e-cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol, stimulants, opiates (including fentanyl), Methamphetamine, Mushrooms, MDMA, etc...),
- Information on how to recognize problematic substance use
- Overdose Prevention (opiates and stimulants)
- Naloxone Education
- And Information on how to talk to peers, family, and friends about substance use.

Is beneficial at decreasing substance use and morbidity among teens, but abstinence based “Just Say No” curriculum shows no benefit when looked at 5 and 10 years later and in the case of D.A.R.E. actually shows to increase substance use.

According to an article in Bangor Daily News back in 2016 60 maine schools were still teaching abstinence based curriculum such as the revamped D.A.R.E. program called Keepin’ It Real (REAL stands for the steps you take to say no to substances, Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) and we don’t need mandated D.A.R.E. in schools, so I recommend putting parameters around what type of programs can be taught.

Also the bill’s language should be changed to non-stigmatizing language. I recommend using Substance Use and Prevention any place in the bill where it uses “Substance Abuse and Prevention” Substance Abuse is not the preferred term and the bill should reflect that.

I’m willing to answer any questions you may have.

Mikki Rice