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March 2, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD330: An act to Prevent Accidental Overdoses by Establishing a Protocol for Prescription Drug Recovery

Dear Senator Claxton and Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Sarah Becker. I'm a Maine RN BSN with experience working in home health hospice care. I'm here to support my friend in her tragic loss. I'm also here to bring continued awareness to the issue of dangerous, controlled medications in the home, and also to solutions that can address any possibility of divergence of these substances.

Drawing from my own experience & research, I'm aware that Maine agencies do have policies already in place, that require immediate, in-home disposal of medications obtained by the agency during hospice care. These policies also require documentation into the electronic charting system of at least the drug, the quantity present, and the fact that it was disposed of. There is, however, often a lack of monitoring of such charting, which dilutes the effective nature of such policies.

Additionally, in hospice situations, families are often left with a slew of medications, upon their loved one's death. These remaining meds could include other potentially dangerous drugs, which may have been prescribed prior to hospice care. These meds don't fall under the policy responsibility of the hospice agencies, and are instead the family's responsibility to dispose of. Lack of knowledge around this issue, and lack of easy access to disposal sites, may cause increased danger. Families are often grieving

and dealing with the many issues at hand when a loved one dies, and this may result in those meds remaining in the home with potentially no monitoring, allowing for the possibility of diversion.

The home health agencies in Maine, remain the closest point of contact and resources for educating families, and encouraging protective measures such as lockboxes and other security provisions. These measures often must be taken at the family's expense, but the agencies can at least provide knowledge around the necessity of these options.

The suggestion made by the Home Care and Hospice Alliance of Maine, in response to this bill, is only to continue education on proper medication management and disposal. I feel that this should instead be required education, and that this management also needs to be documented into the electronic record, in every patient's home. It's also imperative that we assist families in navigating the barriers to proper safety and disposal protocols.

One example of an under-utilized resource is the Dispose Rx program, which could be better utilized by the agencies themselves, or at least better shared with families as an available assistance option. Dispose Rx provides an easy, portable disposal kit which utilizes neutralizing powders in order to render pills, liquids and other meds as safely disposable into the trash. Depending on the availability of other resources, this one program could make a real difference for many families.

My personal experience with my own brother, is a painful reminder of the legacy that can result from less than sufficient handling of these issues. Ethan was an honor-role student, a talented athlete and a well-loved, outgoing young man. Unfortunately, as a result of his obtaining opioids as a vibrant teen , he struggled through a 20 year journey of relentless addiction, resulting in his untimely death.

The extent of the tragedy and loss felt by so many Maine families, is too great. Too great to not continue in our collective efforts to do everything within our power to keep these dangerous substances out of the hands of anyone's children or loved ones. These substances may as well be loaded guns, in the hands of children, suffering families, and those at risk for diversion, and ultimately, tragedy.

I appreciate your time and attention to these issues, and your availability to hear my concerns in support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Sarah Becker RN, BSN