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Introducing LD 269, “An Act To Prohibit Smoking In Bus Shelters”

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Senator Heather Sanborn and I represent Senate District 30, which includes part of Portland and part of Westbrook. I’m here today to introduce LD 269, “An Act To Prohibit Smoking In Bus Shelters.”

This past November, I was contacted by one of my constituents, a man named Stan who is in his 80s and relies on the bus in order to be able to do errands and move about the city. He shared with me his many experiences of having to wait in rain and bitter cold outside of the bus shelter because there were individuals smoking inside of the shelter.

In Portland, many of these bus shelters are small spaces that are fully enclosed on three sides plus a roof. You can imagine that finding the shelter at your bus stop filled with smoke on a cold rainy day would not only be unpleasant, but would be harmful. As this committee knows, second-hand smoke is a public health danger that our statutes already provide protection against.

Indeed, arguably smoking in bus shelters is already prohibited by our current law. The current statute says that “smoking is prohibited in all enclosed areas of public places.” This bill would simply clarify that bus shelters are included as one of those enclosed public spaces. These shelters are there for everyone who wants to cover out of the wind and cold. Making this clarification is not prohibiting anyone from using the shelter and certainly not barring anyone from smoking. It merely means that someone would be required to step out of the shelter in order to smoke, rather than forcing non-smokers like Stan out into the cold.

Stan couldn’t join us today, but he has submitted a letter describing his experiences. I encourage you to read it.

Thank you for your time and I would take any questions you might have.