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Testimony of J. Sam Hurley, MPH, EMPS, NRP

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Department of Public Safety

In Support of LD 1333

“An Act Concerning the Dispensation of Naloxone Hydrochloride by Emergency Medical Services Providers”

Presented by Representative Zager of Portland

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Hearing: Friday, April 23, 2021 at 09:00

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

My name is Sam Hurley and I am the Director of Maine Emergency Medical Services, Maine EMS, within the Department of Public Safety. I am testifying on behalf of Maine Department of Public Safety and Maine EMS in support of LD 1333, *"An Act Concerning the Dispensation of Naloxone Hydrochloride by Emergency Medical Services Providers"* and Representative Zager’s proposed amendment.

In 2020, EMS clinicians across the State of Maine administered naloxone to 962 patients suspected of experiencing an opioid-related overdose. The lifesaving medication, naloxone or Narcan, is critical to saving these persons’ lives in the event of an overdose. The State of Maine has been working diligently to ensure that persons at high-risk for an overdose are eligible to get naloxone through their pharmacy or through programs administered by Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

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Several research studies have shown that there is a significant linkage between non-fatal overdoses and fatal overdoses within a one-year time span.^{1,2,3} For this reason, it is imperative that we outfit these individuals who are at higher risk with resources and support to help mitigate morbidity and mortality. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with various other stakeholders including the Department of Public Safety, have been working to build out programs throughout the state to support persons experiencing substance use disorder and their families. This bill is another extension of that effort to ensure that EMS clinicians, post-resuscitation with naloxone, can dispense leave-behind naloxone kits to the patient, their family and/or friends.

DHHS' Tier One naloxone distributors have partnered with many emergency departments across the state to ensure that patients who are treated in their facility for an overdose are discharged with naloxone; however, not every patient who receives naloxone from EMS gets transported to the hospital. In 2020, 14% of the 962 patients refused transport to the hospital after being resuscitated by naloxone.⁴ This currently represents a missed opportunity to provide these individuals and their family and/or friends with this life-saving medication and education as EMS clinicians are currently not authorized to dispense medications, only administer.

This legislation authorizes Maine EMS to expand our current protocols to allow EMS clinicians to dispense the naloxone nasal spray to ensure that family members and friends of persons experiencing substance use disorder are empowered to be able to help save their loved one's life. We ask that the Committee consider adding an emergency clause to this proposed legislation to ensure that EMS clinicians can get this medication in the hands of those who need it most as quickly as possible. Maine EMS continues to work extensively with Director Gordon Smith, Maine DHHS, the University of Maine, and other various partners to strengthen our unified response to this epidemic that continues to affect our state and its residents. We see this capacity

¹ Caudarella, A., Dong, H., Milloy, M., Kerr, T., Wood, E., & Hayashi, K. (2016). Non-fatal overdose as a risk factor for subsequent fatal overdose among people who inject drugs. *Drug And Alcohol Dependence*, 162, 51-55. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.02.024

² Olfson, M., Wall, M., Wang, S., Crystal, S., & Blanco, C. (2018). Risks of fatal opioid overdose during the first year following nonfatal overdose. *Drug And Alcohol Dependence*, 190, 112-119. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2018.06.004

³ Larochelle, M., Bernson, D., Land, T., Stopka, T., Wang, N., & Xuan, Z. et al. (2018). Medication for Opioid Use Disorder After Nonfatal Opioid Overdose and Association With Mortality. *Annals Of Internal Medicine*, 169(3), 137. doi: 10.7326/m17-3107

⁴ Maine EMS. (2021). Maine EMS and Fire Incident Reporting System. Accessed on April 19, 2021.

to dispense naloxone as another “tool in our tool belt” to help support persons affected by substance use disorder throughout the State of Maine.

We appreciate your time and consideration of this bill and would like to reiterate our complete support of its passage, including an emergency clause. I am more than happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time, but please feel free to reach out to me anytime if there is any additional information I can offer you and/or the Committee.

Thank you.