



STATE OF MAINE  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE  
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GORDON SMITH  
DIRECTOR, OPIOID RESPONSE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 1333, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISPENSATION OF NALOXONE HYDROCHLORIDE BY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS BY GORDON H. SMITH, J.D., DIRECTOR OF OPIOID RESPONSE BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, APRIL 23, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the committee. I am Gordon Smith of East Winthrop and I am testifying before you today in support of L.D. 1333 in my capacity as Director of Opioid Response working in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. When you very graciously provided me an opportunity earlier this session to brief you on the updated Opioid Response Strategic Action Plan, I noted this bill which is specifically referred to in the Plan as part of our harm-reduction activities. I share in the responsibility for the bill as printed not being the correct draft and I apologize for that error. Rep. Zager has furnished you with the correct language in a proposed committee amendment.

The language in the amendment, if enacted and signed into law, would allow EMS personnel to furnish individuals at risk of an overdose with naloxone when authorized through a standing order and protocol issued by the EMS Medical Direction and Practices Board. J. Sam Hurley, Director of EMS will testify in support of the bill and can address any questions you may have about how the Board operates.

As Rep. Zager has noted, we are still experiencing a high number of fatal overdoses. But for every fatality, there are several "saves" which provide an opportunity to connect the individual with harm-reduction services, including a double-dose kit of Narcan. The new OPTIONS program is also available to connect the individual with services or a pathway to recovery if the individual is ready to start that journey.

Naloxone is a remarkable drug that blocks the effects of opioids. It is safe and not subject to abuse and since first being authorized in Maine, it has saved the lives of at least 2000 Mainers. It can very quickly restore normal respiration to a person whose breathing has slowed or stopped as a result of overdosing with heroin, fentanyl or other opioids. Unfortunately, the medication is not effective in reversing an overdose from non-opioid substances, such as cocaine, meth or other stimulants.

While naloxone is available in different forms, including an injectable product, it is anticipated that the nasal form, under the brand name of Narcan, will be distributed by EMS. Executive Order 2 issued in February of 2019, authorized the state to use federal funds to purchase Narcan kits and since September of 2019, our Naloxone Distribution network has purchased and distributed over 60,000 doses of Narcan. The Attorney General's Office also continues to distribute 625 Narcan kits every quarter to law enforcement agencies across the state. I believe that the federal funds available through the Office of Behavioral Health are sufficient to purchase the additional kits that would serve the interests of this legislation.

Police and fire officers can, under existing law, distribute naloxone. It is time for EMTs to be able to distribute it as well. If there is strong support for the bill, I would ask that you consider an emergency preamble. When lives are at stake, the sooner we can do this, the better. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gordon" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Smith".

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