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May 21, 2021

Hon. Ned Claxton
Hon. Michele Meyer
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Cross Building, Room 209
Augusta, Maine 04332

Re: LD 1718, *An Act To Establish an Accidental Drug Overdose Death Review Panel*

Greetings, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of LD 1718, *An Act To Establish an Accidental Drug Overdose Death Review Panel*. This bill is modeled from legislation considered in the 129th Legislature which was not enacted to the pandemic. This letter is similar to what I submitted to the Judiciary Committee in the 129th, and its contents are applicable to this bill.

The opioid epidemic has taken a firm hold in Maine, and it impacts individuals in every corner of our state. As evidenced by the monthly and quarterly Drug Death Report published by the Office of the Attorney General ("OAG"), the opioid epidemic remains a major public health crisis requiring an immediate and sustained response. When we thought it could not get worse, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an increase in circumstances leading to accidental drug overdoses in Maine and across the nation. There are many individuals and organizations working tirelessly to support those impacted by the opioid epidemic, but there are limited opportunities for collaborative examination of how all these stakeholders may work together to reduce drug overdose deaths. Maine would benefit from the collaborative examination intended by this legislation.

The proposed Accidental Drug Overdose Death Review Panel is modeled after other panels that have been established to bring stakeholders together to examine tragic activity in our state.¹ As is proposed in LD 1718, this panel would operate under the auspices of the OAG, which is consistent with how the other panels operate. This panel would play a constructive role in bringing stakeholders together to examine specific cases, identify what is working, and make recommendations for what may be done to prevent accidental overdoses from occurring.

¹ Deadly Force Review Panel (5 MRS §200-K) and the Maine Elder Death Analysis Review Team (5 MRS § 200-H)

I thank Governor Mills and Representative Evans for bringing this important bill forward.
I encourage the Committee to support it.

Sincerely,



Aaron M. Frey
Attorney General