

Statement by - **Scott M. Gagnon, MPP, PS-C – Gray, Maine**
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Chair, Mainers Protecting Our Youth and Communities
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To Members of the Committee on State and Local Government

April 24th, 2017

Senator Davis, Representative Martin, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Scott M. Gagnon a resident of Gray, Maine. I am a Certified Prevention Specialist with over a decade of experience in the youth substance abuse prevention field. I am the Chair of Mainers Protecting Our Youth and Communities, and have served as one of the Co Chairs of the Prevention & Harm Reduction Task Force of the Maine Opiate Collaborative. I am here to testify in support of LD 105, An Act to Create a Centralized Authority to Combat Opiate Addiction in Maine, with the amendments brought forth by the bill sponsor to locate the position within the Governor's office.

The subject of this bill aligns with one of the recommendations that came from the Maine Opiate Collaborative Prevention & Harm Reduction Task Force. As we worked through our processes to research and form our final recommendations we acknowledged how Maine's addiction crisis cuts across all aspects of life and impacts many systems in local and state government. The Task Force saw the need to increase data gathering and sharing, cross-communication, and collaborations in a formal way. This would foster consistent approaches across departments, agencies, and systems, using common languages and metrics, and have all working towards the same goals with strategies and initiatives in alignment. The Task Force therefore recommended the creation of a cabinet level State position charged with driving and overseeing the implementation of inter-department and agency collaborations and systems.

We already have a great example of how this central authority works on the federal level through the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The Director of ONDCP evaluates, coordinates, and oversees both the international and domestic anti-drug efforts of executive branch agencies and ensures that such efforts sustain and complement State and local anti-drug activities. Ideally, the Central Authority proposed in LD 105 would function very similarly. Additionally, at the federal level there are interdepartmental committees that bring representatives of different governmental departments to collaborate and align strategies on specific areas of substance use, such as the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking. I would strongly encourage a similar committee in Maine for the opiate crisis, to be convened and facilitated by the office of the Central Authority proposed in this bill.