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AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF MAINE
TESTIMONY OF JILL BARKLEY, MPA.

LD 1046 – Ought To Pass

An Act to Provide Immunity for Prescribing and Dispensing Intranasal Naloxone Kits

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

April 23rd, 2013

Senator Valentino, Representative Priest, and members of the Committee on Judiciary, greetings. My name is Jill Barkley, and I am Public Policy Advocate for the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, we ask you to vote “ought to pass” on ~~LD 1046~~ An Act to Provide Immunity for Prescribing and Dispensing Intranasal Naloxone Kits.

Recently, I testified before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety committee on a bill that would act as a good Samaritan law, protecting someone who called emergency services to report an overdose. My testimony focused on the ability to prevent deaths due to overdose in Maine. This bill strikes a similar chord, allowing immunity for a health care professional who provides a person experiencing an overdose or who is likely to experience an overdose with a naloxone kit. Giving heroin users kits with the overdose antidote naloxone is a cost-effective way to prevent overdose deaths and save lives.

In San Francisco, naloxone has been distributed since the late nineties with support from their department of public health. Since then, overdose fatalities decreased from a high of 155 deaths in 1995 to only 10 deaths in 2010¹. The ACLU of Maine continues to assert that drug use is fundamentally a public health issue and must be dealt with as such. Successful drug policies incorporate prevention, treatment and public safety. Health care professionals who assist in preventing overdose deaths in Maine should not be penalized for doing so.

The ACLU of Maine recognizes that overdose prevention is just one piece of a larger puzzle in addressing this public health issue. We commend non-profit organizations and state programs that seek to address and remedy the problem of drug abuse. We are supporting this legislation in hopes that it will stop preventable deaths in our state and allow health care professionals to assist those who are in danger of overdose. We encourage you to vote ought to pass. Thank you.

¹ <http://www.washington.edu/news/2012/12/31/study-shows-naloxone-kits-cost-effective-in-preventing-overdose-deaths/>