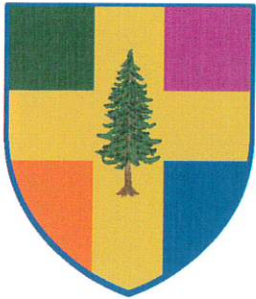


EPISCOPAL  
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ESTD 1820

February 9, 2022

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is John Hennessy and I am the Director of Public Advocacy for the Episcopal Diocese of Maine and I serve as the co-chair of the Maine Council of Churches Public Policy Committee. The Council has seven member denominations and two associate member churches representing 439 congregations with more than 55,000 parishioners across the state.

I am offering our testimony in **support** of LD 1862 – An Act to Strengthen Maine’s Good Samaritan Laws Concerning Drug-Related Medical Assistance.

The parable of the Good Samaritan would seem to open the floodgates and drown us beneath the troubles of the world. For, truth be told, we have needy neighbors in every direction. It’s hard to know what to do. Can we keep our souls from turning numb in the face of the wholesale sorrows that surround us? How can we avoid ending up exhausted, adding ourselves to the list of those aching for attention? Is there a way to sidestep compassion fatigue, so that the fire of concern within us does not flare up and then burn out?

The bill before you would extend the State's Good Samaritan laws by exempting from arrest or prosecution for a nonviolent offense or for a violation of probation or condition of release a person at the location of a drug-related overdose for which medical assistance was sought or naloxone was administered.

Looking back to the parable, the Samaritan recognizes a bond between himself and this stranger who lies half dead beside the highway. Such recognition comes at a cost, for the Samaritan identifies with the wounded stranger and as far as he can, feels his pain, his abandonment, his fear.

The Samaritan recognizes quickly what must be done. He does not hesitate to put his resources to use. Clearly, he is the right person in the right place at the right time and when one of us is suffering the effects of a drug incident going wrong, we must protect anyone who stands ready to help.

In a world where we have needy neighbors in every direction, how can we keep from numbness of soul, exhaustion, or the extinction of our internal fire of concern? The actions of the Samaritan provide us with a pattern to follow and I hope you will support this important legislation.

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