The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine  
State House  
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing L.D. 1326, “An Act To Reduce Morbidity and Mortality Related to Opioid Misuse.”

Two components of this bill are particularly concerning to me. The first is the decriminalizing of certain drug paraphernalia in the midst of an addiction epidemic. The second creates a “medical assistance” exemption from criminal liability for a person who seeks medical assistance for an overdose. This is similar to LD 1079, which was vetoed and sustained.

I am frustrated at the message this bill would send to our children by legalizing the possession of needles and providing immunity for illicit drug possession in certain circumstances. Maine kids need to understand there is no “safe drug use” anywhere, anytime. They need to understand that drug addiction destroys lives. And we, as the State’s leaders, cannot send a message of passive consent for these dangerous and potentially deadly activities.

I share the desire to help people get into treatment. Addiction is one of the greatest destructive forces facing our families today. Maine’s families are Maine’s future—they need to succeed and prosper. That is why I have been working with the Department of Health and Human Services to make it a priority to invest in evidence-based treatment options that will produce the best outcomes for individuals dealing with addiction. We’ve increased access to medicated-assisted treatment in areas that have the greatest need with a focus on helping the uninsured.

Last year, DHHS invested $3 million to increase access to services, and in December $2.4 million went to create 359 MAT slots throughout the state, specifically for the uninsured. Most recently, my Administration worked with the Legislature to authorize $4.8 million to launch the Opioid Health Home model; this will improve access to coordinated primary care and addiction treatment for more than 400 Mainers. This fiscal year, we anticipate the State will spend $80 million for substance abuse treatment—a significant increase from the $49 million spent in 2008.

Let’s continue to engage our families and communities and prioritize quality treatment, rather than erode the legal consequences and send the wrong message to our kids.

For these reasons, I return L.D. 1326 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage  
Governor