



**State of Maine**  
**131st Maine Senate**  
**Senate Republican Office**

**PRESS BRIEFING – SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH**  
**APRIL 25, 2023 – AFTER SESSION (approximately 12:30 p.m.)**  
**WELCOME CENTER/PRESS ROOM**

**What:** Issues surrounding mental health, drug enforcement, education, prevention and recovery  
**Who:** Senators Lisa Keim, Brad Farrin, Marianne Moore, James Libby and Matt Harrington

**Introduction & Background (Sen. Keim & Sen. Moore)**

*“The war on drugs in 2023 is significantly different than it was even 10 years ago, before any of us had heard about the drug Fentanyl. Decision-makers need to understand that this drug is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin and it’s here. It’s in Maine. It’s killing the very people everyone in this room is tasked to protect.” ~ Androscoggin County Sheriff Eric Samson in testimony to CJPS on behalf of Maine Sheriffs’ Association*

- Maine experienced 716 fatal overdoses in 2022, a 13% jump from 631 in 2021.
- Fatal overdoses in Maine have risen more than 71% since 2017 mostly due to fentanyl
- Nearly 100 overdose deaths have already been confirmed/suspected so far this year.
- With January and February already running higher compared to last year for both fatal and total overdoses, 2023 may be the deadliest year yet.
- A recent bust resulted in a seizure of enough fentanyl “to kill the entire population of Portland” according to law enforcement.
- Of the 56 confirmed drug death cases so far in 2023, nonpharmaceutical fentanyl was the most frequent cause of death for 43 (77%) of the victims.
- A recent bust in Portland resulted in a seizure of enough fentanyl that law enforcement said was “enough to kill the entire population of Portland.”
- Cumberland, Penobscot, York and Androscoggin counties continue to be hardest hit.

Action must be centered on three basic elements:

- **Education/Prevention** (Sen. Moore & Sen. Libby)
  - DARE programming
  - School curriculum, school training via LD 772 (130<sup>th</sup>)
- **Treatment/Recovery** (Sen. Moore & Sen. Farrin)
  - Streamline government processes for better case management
  - Access to child psychiatric residential treatment
  - Increase recovery beds and staffing
- **Enforcement** (Sen. Farrin)
  - LD 986 – Increased penalties for trafficking “manufactured poison”
  - Avoid all carrot, no stick situation

**Closing remarks, Q/A**