

Good day Senate Chair Brakey and House Chair Gattine and also to the other honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Susan Lamb and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I am here today to testify on LD 1407, "An Act To Require Screening and Testing for Illegal Substances of Beneficiaries under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program".

As I'm sure you can imagine, the Maine Chapter of NASW opposes this measure. We believe that the use of illegal substances is a root cause of poverty but we also believe that the best way to treat addiction is not with a game of "gotcha". People with addiction are often parents of children and those children, living below the poverty level are entitled to food on the table and a roof over their heads, no matter what their parent's addiction issues are.

Unless and until the state makes it a policy to assume guardianship of all children whose parents suffer from addiction, and I would pause here to remind you that Maine does not have the capacity to do that, we do not want to see the state making life worse for these families. They already have problems, and those problems would be better off if dealt with by effective treatment, which means voluntary treatment, not punitive measures that can only hurt children, the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.