

Kari Morissette
Portland

LD967 possession decrim

Hello everyone my name is Kari Morissette and I am the executive director of the church of safe injection. Our organization provides safe supplies like naloxone and works directly with people in active use to help them stay connected to resources that keep them and our community safe.

It is solely by the grace of God that I stand in front of you today, I wasn't always the person that I am. Worthless, trash, junkie, prostitute, Homeless, drug addict, waste of space. These used to be terms that I let define me Because at the end of the day they were true and I didn't think I could ever be anything more than that. I was once so low in life that I thought I was going to die a homeless prostitute in Miami in some bush and I was OK with that. I grew up in an abusive home that led to me being on my own at a young age. I am a human trafficking survivor. I have been shot, stabbed and survived endocarditis 3 times, I have been sexually assaulted more times than I can count. These are just a few of the places my addiction took me. I'm telling you this today so that when I say it's a miracle I'm standing here you know the reasoning behind it. You know people used to tell me that even if I got clean like I would not amount to anything. At the time I believe them. A lot of people don't realize the drug addiction is not a choice No one is ever eight years old saying I want to grow up to be a drug addict. I can't tell you how many times I overdosed. I can't tell you how many times somebody used naloxone on me and saved my life. Today I stand before you 17 months sober and the executive director of a harm reduction organization. I manage a sober house here in Portland Maine. I sponsor women. I was lucky enough to find recovery but not everyone is so lucky. For those people that you find recovery the life that our addiction took us down remain barriers. Although I am a very active member in the harm reduction and recovery community I still have a lot of barriers in my personal life. I am 28 time convicted felon and 23 of those are for simple drug possession. It makes it hard to get an apartment and looking for jobs is not easy. I recently told the reporter that if one law enforcement officer would've referred me to treatment it could've saved me a lot of pain. Addiction is not a joke it should not be taken lightly. We need to remember that the people stuck in this obsession are still our community members and they deserve a life if they so choose to stop using. I work everyday with people who are still actively using and it hurts my soul to hear the harassment and barriers they face everyday. I support LD967 to not only spare our community members future barriers but to break down the stigmatized thoughts that immediately follow incarceration. If we can end some in the suffering for people actively using then why not? I ask you today to please vote in favor of this bill. Thank