

Testimony of Dan Morin on behalf of Jonathan Fellers, M.D.
Department of Psychiatry
Maine Medical Center

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
In Opposition to LD 153
“An Act Regarding Transportation of Methadone Patients”

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Dr. Jonathan Fellers providing written testimony in opposition to LD 153, “An Act Regarding Transportation of Methadone Patients.”

The bill proposes to universally bar any patient receiving methadone, be it for pain or for opioid use disorder, from driving a motor vehicle. This action can only be seen as discriminatory as it singles out one drug – methadone - that is actually used to address addiction to opioids. Like any drug, if methadone is used appropriately and as ordered by a treating physician, there is no evidence to suggest that it causes impaired driving. In fact, because methadone must be administered in a treatment facility, driving is a necessity for patients who need methadone to address their opioid addiction to receive treatment.

Research shows that maintenance treatment with methadone does not impair driving as a general rule¹. When methadone does lead to impairment, its magnitude is less than for other known prescription medications (i.e. carisoprodol, benzodiazepines, hypnotics)².

Finally, the bill would inhibit a patient’s ability to seek care, hold down a job, and participate in the community. It asks patients to choose between taking a life-saving medication and being able to drive to access needed medical care, hold down a job, and participate in their communities.

Passing this legislation bill would negatively impact our member’s ability to provide care, refer for services, and discourage recovery in our communities. For those reasons I urge the Committee to unanimously vote Ought Not to Pass when considering LD 153. I would be happy to provide additional information or address any questions, comments, or concerns in advance of the upcoming work session.

1. Schindler SD, Ortner R, Peternell A, Eder H, Opgenoorth E, Fischer G. (2004). Maintenance therapy with synthetic opioids and driving aptitude. *Eur Addict Res*; 10(2): 80-7.

2. Bramness JG, Skurtveit S, Mørland J, Engeland A. (2012). An increased risk of motor vehicle accidents after prescription of methadone. *Addiction*; 107(5): 967-72.