

TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE ANNE HASKELL IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 887,
AN ACT TO INCLUDE MEDICINAL MARIJUANA PATIENTS IN THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES
PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, APRIL 25, 2011

Senator McCormick, Representative Strang Burgess and members of the Committee, I am State Representative Anne Haskell of Portland and I am pleased this afternoon to present for your consideration L.D. 887, AN ACT TO INCLUDE MEDICINAL MARIJUANA PATIENTS IN THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM. The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to include the names and related information of medicinal marijuana patients registered with the State in the Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program operated by the Office of Substance Abuse. The information submitted would be confidential as is currently the case with respect to the patients who are prescribed controlled substances. The Prescription Monitoring Program, established through the leadership of the Office of Substance Abuse and a former House chair of this committee, Anne Perry, has proven to be an important tool in the fight against prescription drug abuse in the five plus years it has been in existence.

I am a strong proponent of the medical marijuana law and of the Prescription Monitoring Program and this bill brings the two together in the interest of public health and safety. The purpose of the Monitoring Program is to assist physicians and other prescribers in assuring that the patients for whom they are prescribing narcotics and other powerful medication are not “doctor shopping” and diverting and selling or otherwise distributing the medication or abusing it themselves. Others testifying in support of the bill will describe the extent of Maine’s very serious problem of opioid addiction, but you would only need to pick up just about any daily newspaper to read about the problem and its tragic impact. Last year, was the first year in which opioid addiction exceeded alcohol abuse as the primary factor in treatment admissions in the state, as reported by OSA.

If we are asking our health professionals to take the time to use the Prescription Monitoring Program when prescribing narcotics, we should make the database as complete as possible. If a patient has not disclosed to the physician that he or she has a state certificate allowing them to purchase or use up to two and one half ounces of marijuana every two weeks, the availability of this information through the PMP will not only assist that physician in provided the best care to the patient, but will be an important barrier to potential diversion of narcotics or marijuana if the patient is so inclined.

In the interest of time and your busy hearing schedule today, I will leave it to others, including the Maine Medical Association, to provide you with further details on the value of this legislation, but I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.