

127th Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 12

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**Sen. David Miramant Testimony in Support of LD 1380, An Act To Legalize, Tax and
Regulate Marijuana
Wednesday, May 20, 2015**

Senator Rosen, Representative Fowle and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is David Miramant and I represent the good people of Senate District 12 which includes Appleton, Camden, Criedhaven Twp., Cushing, Friendship, Hope, Isle au Haut, Matinicus Isle Plantation, Muscle Ridge Islands Township, North Haven, Owl's Head, Rockland, Rockport, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston, Union, Vinalhaven and Warren. I am delighted to both cosponsor, and speak in support of, of LD 1380, "An Act To Legalize, Tax and Regulate Marijuana."

Too many would-be students have been denied access to the ladder of opportunity because they were unlucky enough to have been found with a joint in their pocket. A drug record of any kind precludes students from accessing Pell Grants and Stafford Student Loans, the very tools that can help lift families out of poverty.

And by precluding them - for life - from this ladder, what have we created for them instead? A spiral staircase down. In place of an education or a trade, people are instead forced into a lifetime of dead end jobs with low wages. At this point, they may well intersect with the criminal justice system again, only this time for a crime that actually harms someone, further eroding any chance they had to lift themselves up.

All because they consumed a substance safer than alcohol.

You will likely hear from many people talking about protecting our children from having access to marijuana. We aren't proposing giving access to children, only recognizing that our kids make mistakes and don't deserve to be considered criminals because of it.

How are we protecting our children if Prohibition is preventing them from attending college or a trade school?

How are we protecting our children if Prohibition is allowing the drug cartels to sell to them, and putting them in contact with someone selling seriously dangerous drugs?

How exactly are we protecting our children by creating scenarios for them to intersect with law enforcement over a substance that has been criminalized based on misinformation and hype?

And how are we protecting children who are living in poverty because their parents can't access the student loans that would lift their family out of that poverty?

Regardless of the reasons for ending Prohibition, the reality is that we have the potential for two initiatives to come next session, rendering this issue entirely out of our hands. We have a chance to set the policy - to get it right - and then to ask the people of Maine whether they want to keep or end Prohibition. I believe Mainers will vote to end Prohibition. If that wasn't the case, the substance abuse counselors wouldn't be here in force. It makes it all the more important that we get the policy right and do it now - when we can plan ahead - instead of scrambling in 2017 as Washington State and Colorado have had to do.

I believe adults should have the right to choose, and the responsibility to choose wisely. It's why I don't believe Prohibition is the right policy for Maine. The consequences of the policy have had far more deleterious impacts on families and communities than the effects of marijuana could ever possibly claim. That said, the issue is immediately before us, and we can either drive the train and set the policy, or we can scramble. Our constituents deserve the right to vote on this, but they deserve to vote on a well thought out policy. Rep. Russell's bill strikes a fair balance between public safety and civil liberties, while ensuring Maine people get a solid vote.

For all these reasons - and many more - I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1380. Thank you; I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.