



To The Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs  
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### **LD 355 OUGHT TO PASS**

Good morning. My name is Mark Barnett. I'm a resident of Auburn, the owner of a medical retail store and coffee shop in Portland called Higher Grounds of Maine, and the Executive Chair and Policy Director for the Maine Craft Cannabis Association. I am testifying today in support of reconsidering the work of Maine's Cannabis Advisory Commission (CAC).

The CAC is not functioning as intended to provide review of the totality of Maine's cannabis policies. We think the changes made with LD 1589 were a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done for the CAC to be a meaningful body. We believe the CAC needs to be reconsidered for two main reasons: first, it is too large, unwieldy, and heavy on bureaucrats with little to no relevant experience on the issue to achieve meaningful discussion and analysis; second, its 'duties' miss the mark of what a state Commission on an industry as profoundly important to this state should do, which is support and promote the success of that industry and its participants, from the cultivator all the way to the end user. Furthermore, the duties that it does have in statute contribute to the stigma around cannabis use that powered the disastrous War on Drugs. They are, in our opinion, focused on the imagined 'dangers' of cannabis and on 'operationalizing' the commerce of cannabis rather than on studying what cannabis could mean to us as a population as plant medicine, alternative therapy, enjoyment, and as a rich source of medical research.

For example, the CAC is explicitly meant to push medical and 'recreational' use of cannabis together for regulatory purposes, an outcome that this state's medical cannabis businesses, patients, and certifying practitioners have fought against tooth and nail. Why? Because the concept of 'alignment' has been cover for a program explicitly aimed at shutting down Maine's small-scale medical operators. From statute:

#### **§903. Duties**

**3.C.** Standardize, coordinate or integrate the adult use cannabis and medical cannabis laws, rules and programs in the State, including, but not limited to, recommended changes regarding the standardization, coordination or integration of the laws and rules relating to the testing, labeling and packaging of adult use cannabis and adult use cannabis products and cannabis and cannabis products for medical use.

This sounds nice, but cannabis has enormous medical potential that is completely overlooked in Maine's Adult Use policies which focus on unfounded 'dangers' of cannabis in order to, in our view, effectively reduce small business participation and success in the program. Further, Maine's Adult Use testing and packaging laws represent, quite frankly, policy failure. Packaging



has already created huge piles of unnecessary plastic waste due to an obsession with 'safety' that has no grounding in public health data. All of these layers of complicated plastic still couldn't stop a 5-year old with a screwdriver—but they may be too difficult for a more elderly or infirm individual to open on their own. Testing is so overbearing, complicated, and ultimately meaningless in its results for the customer that every session numerous bills have had to be filed just to make the statute somewhat more workable for operators. 'Mandatory testing' in Adult Use is explicitly designed to undercut small craft production and favor large-scale industrial farming.

Why would we want to push medical into that same mess? We saw what 'standardizing' Medical and Adult Use rules would look like in the failed effort at Rulemaking from the OCP in 2020, that we and nearly every other speaker at the numerous public hearings saw for what it was: an attempt to destroy Maine's dynamic, highly successful, and popular medical cannabis program and remake it in the image of the Adult Use program, which was designed for well-capitalized investors rather than for everyday Mainers. It's time that we took that bias out of our statute everywhere we can, and reforming the CAC provides an opportunity to do that.

Sincerely,

Mark Barnett