

Eben Sumner
Maine Growers Alliance
LD 978

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. My name is Eben Sumner, I'm a resident of West Baldwin, Maine. I'm here today speaking as the President and Legislative Chair of the Maine Growers Alliance, founding member of the Cannabis Council of Maine, shaper participant in Seed2Health, and business owner in the cannabis space.

I am writing today in support of LD978 ought to pass, An Act to Maintain Legislative Oversight of the Maine Medical Use of Cannabis Program by Requiring Major Substantive Rulemaking. I was part of the stakeholders that drafted LD1242 in the 130th Congress, the initial bill that yielded rulemaking power from the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP), made it major substantive, and delivered it's oversight to this committee. It is my opinion, along with the many stakeholders in the Medical Program, that LD1242 rescued the Medical Program from closure through predatory and regulatory capture. For this year's newest members of the VLA Committee, the progress that was made through nine hours of supportive public testimonies, stakeholder work groups, and continuous efforts to work with OCP, it is imperative that the VLA Committee retains oversight of any rulemaking in the future.

The reason why I feel this is so important is because of the multiple attempts made by OCP to submit rules that would have devastated the medical program. OCP was given the chance to simplify their rules package after the initial hearing. However, they did not change the 80+ pages of over burdensome regulations, instead they ignored the will of Mainers and resubmitted the rules package with minor and insignificant changes. Thankfully, after LD1242 passed, we were able to rescue the program, yet we see more of the same behavior coming from OCP. In the short time LD1242 became law, we've seen OCP release guidelines regarding tobacco and cannabis. These guidelines, which OCP technically should not have released, caused a major uproar for the Medical Program participants that took stakeholder groups a lot of effort and time to educate the Attorney General on the differences between tobacco products, and medically prescribed cannabis products. We also see an effort by OCP to create sting operations at their own will and on their own timeline, this is yet another over reach by the department after the passing of LD1242 as these actions are not defined in statute.

It is my opinion, as well as many stakeholders, that OCP is still mired in a position where cannabis is looked at in a negative and criminal light. We don't feel that OCP has yet earned its rights back to regulate our program without oversight.

I urge you today to vote for LD978 ought to pass to continue oversight of the rules and regulation coming from the Office of Cannabis Policy.

I am available for any follow up questions.

Thank you,
Eben Sumner