

LD 1952 - An Act to Allow On-site Cannabis Consumption

My name is Amy Mayhew, MD and I am a child and adolescent psychiatrist in the state of Maine who works primarily with young people that are at risk of developing or have developed psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. I am here to speak against LD 1952 and HP 1254.

I apologize that I am not able to be in person today, but I feel strongly about the message we are sending our young people with this bill and wanted to submit testimony. In my job as the psychiatrist for an early psychosis team, I know the risks that inherent to young people that are using cannabis, especially those who use between the ages of 16 and 25 years of age. Psychosis is when someone has difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality, such as being paranoid, delusional or seeing and hearing things. In my day-to-day clinical work I see those that believe that cannabis is without risk, as that is the message that is currently being promoted by the cannabis industry. According to the Maine Intergrated Youth Health Survey of 2023, 43.3% of Maine high school seniors have tried cannabis, a 10.2% increase from 2021, when the number 39.3%. The more visible cannabis consumption is, the more teenagers will believe that these activities are acceptable and without significant risk. Consumption of high potency cannabis by young people, especially on a daily basis, has been shown in multiple studies to be linked to developing a psychotic illness such as schizophrenia, decrease in IQ by 5 to 8 points, and changes in attention, executive functioning and memory that persist after abstaining from use. Although certainly the cannabis industry has made efforts to limit access to medicinal and recreational facilities to those who are adults, their proliferation into many neighborhoods and stores means their presence in the minds of our youth is already ubiquitous. Further increasing that presence by having consumption on site will only make cannabis more visible and appealing to young people. Adolescents are of course very impressionable, and as adults we need to promote the message that mind altering substances should be used safely and responsibly. On site consumption appears to be way to create more use; more use of high potency cannabis defined as greater than 15% THC is linked to dependence, especially in those using before the age of 18 years old. I am encouraging the legislature to enact policies that promote responsible adult use, but limit exposing our children and adolescence to what is not safe for minors, just like alcohol and tobacco. I would prefer to not treat more children and adolescents with cannabis-induced psychosis because they are learning the wrong message by our actions as adults. Thank you.