



January 24, 2024

Testimony from Rawan Elfar, Membership and Public Policy Coordinator, Marijuana Policy Project, in support of LD 1952:

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

My name is Rawan Elfar, and I serve as the Membership and Public Policy Coordinator for the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), which has been playing a leading role in marijuana policy reform in the United States for nearly 30 years.

I am writing to express MPP's support for LD 1952, which would allow localities to opt in to license cannabis hospitality establishments — safe, regulated locations where adults can consume cannabis. This legislation would restore the will of voters, give tourists and those who cannot consume at home a legal place to use cannabis, and bring Maine closer to treating cannabis like alcohol.

When Maine voters approved legalizing adults' cannabis use in 2016, the original citizen initiative included on-site consumption. LD 1952, would restore the will of voters.

Right now, tourists have no place to legally use cannabis, which can lead to them consuming it on public streets. LD 1952 would address that omission, create new economic opportunities, and draw in more visitors.

Individuals in public housing and whose landlords ban smoking also have nowhere to legally consume cannabis under current law. This would provide a safe, regulated option in those cities and towns that opt in.

Cannabis is safer than alcohol, which adults can consume in a wide array of locations that are open to the public — including sports venues, bars, restaurants, and even Chuck E Cheese. LD 1952 is far more restrictive than alcohol consumption licensing. But it fills a void, and gives cannabis consumers a controlled and secure environment where they can socialize and responsibly enjoy cannabis products.

Cannabis consumption lounges are already legalized in at least 14 states, including Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Rhode Island. These states have recognized the importance of providing spaces where individuals can consume cannabis safely and responsibly.

Creating safe spaces for cannabis consumption not only aligns with public sentiment but also addresses the evolving landscape of cannabis legalization. By supporting LD 1952, you have the opportunity to contribute to a framework that promotes responsible use, fosters community engagement, and aligns with the desires of the voters.

LD 1952 represents a progressive and balanced approach to cannabis regulation, and its passage would be a testament to the legislature's commitment to upholding the will of the voters.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Sincerely,

Rawan Elfar
Membership and Public Policy Coordinator
Marijuana Policy Project