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Honorable Members of the Veteran and Legal Affairs Department of Maine's
Legislative Body,

I am writing to you today to advocate for the establishment of cannabis consumption lounges in our state, a concept that marks a significant advancement in our approach to cannabis culture, public health, and social interaction.

Cannabis consumption lounges are more than mere establishments; they are pivotal in fostering a responsible, safe, and community-centric approach to cannabis use. These lounges offer controlled environments for adult consumers, effectively reducing unregulated public consumption and the associated social stigmas. They also serve as vital social hubs, especially significant in the post-pandemic era, aiding in the restoration of community connections and the combatting of isolation experienced during COVID-19.

The success of these lounges hinges critically on the knowledge and skills of the budtenders. Recognizing this need, I am currently developing a comprehensive educational program through my business. This program is designed to thoroughly educate the public, patients, and dispensary employees about various aspects of cannabis. While the modules are still in development, our aim is to cover extensive topics including the latest cannabis research, legal compliance, health and safety standards, and customer service excellence. This education is not just a tool for ensuring safety but also a means to enhance the overall consumer experience.

The integration of a structured and certified training program for budtenders should be a mandatory aspect of the legislation governing cannabis consumption lounges. Education is the foundation upon which safe and responsible consumption rests. By ensuring that budtenders are well-educated, we can guarantee that these lounges are not just venues for consumption but are also centers for learning, safety, and responsible guidance.

I urge the committee to consider the inclusion of mandatory educational requirements for budtenders in the cannabis consumption lounge bill. Such a mandate would elevate the role of these lounges, transforming them into spaces where safety, education, and community well-being are paramount. The forthcoming educational program my business is developing aligns perfectly with this vision, aiming to contribute significantly to the knowledge and preparedness of those guiding the consumption experience.

The establishment of cannabis consumption lounges, underpinned by a strong educational framework, represents a progressive step towards a more informed, responsible, and connected cannabis culture in Maine. It is an opportunity to enhance the consumer experience while contributing positively to public health and social cohesion.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I look forward to the possibility of contributing further to this important discussion.

Sincerely,
Katherine