

Arleigh Kraus
Warren
LD 2185

February 7, 2024

The Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Arleigh Kraus. I am a registered cannabis caregiver, farmer, and business owner in Warren. I am a founding member of the Maine Craft Cannabis Association, a member of Seed2Health Learning Health Alliance, and a board member of the Maine Cannabis Union. I have recently been reappointed to the State of Maine Marijuana Advisory Commission as a caregiver representative, and I am a founding member of the Cannabis Council of Maine. I have been a caregiver in Maine for over 10 years.

I am here today in opposition to LD 2185.

The updated re-submitted rule changes from the Office of Cannabis Policy are once again an attack on the thousands of patients and small medical cannabis business owners across the state of Maine.

Two years ago in an effort to bring constructive and positive changes to the medical program rules a group of dedicated medical cannabis patients and business owners (myself included) engaged with the office of cannabis policy in a series of meetings. This was a positive step for the medical cannabis industry as a whole and there were many points of consensus which were reached to benefit patients, caregivers, and state policy. Unfortunately the positive strides which were made at this time were not acted upon by the Office of Cannabis Policy and further talks faltered with the arrival of a new OCP director.

LD 2185 proposes significant negative changes to the Maine Medical Program for patients and caregivers alike. LD 2185 is class warfare plain and simple. LD 2185 is one more step towards allowing corporate capture to be fully formed and the only option for medical cannabis in Maine.

The proposed changes restrict patient access by blocking telehealth as well as delivery in a state still considered the most rural in the nation.

The proposed changes attack the ability of small cannabis FARMERS to sell what they produce by eliminating where they can legally sell to patients. Would this be acceptable to our tomato, potato, apple, blueberry and every other recognized agriculture producer across the state?

Anyone following the cannabis market in Maine as well as across the country is aware that the market is collapsing with the cost of production (from fertilizer to electricity) over 4 times what it was just four years ago. Add to this top heavy regulations, market saturation, and still the inability for banking and loan access for sole owner LLC caregiver businesses and you have a crisis.

The small and short of this legislation is to pave the way for the eradication of small medical cannabis providers and limit patient access. There is no justification for the substantial increase in fines for small violations, heightened security requirements, significantly restricted access to cannabis sales and transactions, restriction of cannabis seeds, and much more.

As a small caregiver business it is impossible to not be absolutely petrified by this assault on my livelihood and impacts on the patients I have seen for over 10 years. While in an industry meeting to discuss the proposed changes earlier this week one of my colleagues said something which very much stopped me in my tracks- it was that standing up to the department puts a target on your back. I absolutely believe this to be true after witnessing several of my peers who have been outspoken have violations and fines issued, and products stopped from being sold. The OCP should not be given more power to take away our ability to stay in business.

We must protect the medical cannabis industry which has been chosen by the people of Maine to be their alternative to big Pharma. Please do not allow a tyrannical approach of regulating medical cannabis to go any farther then this proposal and vote ought not to pass.

Respectfully,

Arleigh A. Kraus