

Stanley Hollenbeck  
Lewiston  
LD 40

Subject: Testimony in Support of LD 40 - Addressing Cannabis Stigma and Promoting Equity

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 40, a legislative proposal that aims to address the pervasive stigma attached to the cannabis industry and promote equity within its regulatory framework. My name is Stanley Hollenbeck, I work for Proctor & Gamble, and I'm a professional artist and graphic designer.

The cannabis industry has long grappled with unwarranted stigma, and LD 40 represents a crucial step towards rectifying this historical bias. I have witnessed firsthand the disparate treatment faced by the cannabis industry compared to other sectors.

LD 40 targets specific aspects of the existing statute that contribute to the perpetuation of stigma and unfair treatment. One notable issue is the requirement for cannabis employees to carry identification cards, a unique demand that raises questions about its necessity and fairness. In most professions, individuals are not compelled to carry identification cards as a routine practice, and the imposition of this requirement within the cannabis industry appears to be a symptom of lingering stigma.

Another key concern addressed by LD 40 is the disqualification of individuals based on past drug offenses. This policy stands in stark contrast to other comparable industries such as food and beverage, retail, and entertainment, where individuals are not automatically disqualified based on previous drug-related issues. The proposed changes in LD 40 are a critical step towards aligning cannabis industry regulations with broader employment practices, fostering a more equitable and inclusive approach to hiring individuals with a range of backgrounds and experiences, even if it requires giving someone a second chance.

The legislative proposal also tackles issues related to fines, rulemaking, and the clarity of language in the existing statute. The \$100,000 fines for the cannabis industry are deemed excessive, especially for small local businesses. LD 40 seeks to reduce the fine structure, bringing adult-use fines in line with those for medical use, and acknowledging the need for proportional penalties.

Furthermore, LD 40 advocates for changes in the rulemaking process, emphasizing that all rulemaking by the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) should go through the legislature. This ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment with the will of the legislature. Additionally, LD 40 addresses the vague and ambiguous language in the current cannabis statute, emphasizing the importance of clear and interpretable laws.

The proposal also challenges the requirement for cannabis business operators to prove compliance with laws from other agencies to OCP. Recognizing that this is outside of OCP's jurisdiction, LD 40 advocates for a streamlined process that eliminates unnecessary barriers.

In conclusion, LD 40 is a comprehensive and thoughtful legislative proposal that addresses various aspects contributing to the stigma surrounding the cannabis industry. It is not a plea for preferential treatment but a call for equitable and just treatment in line with other industries. I urge the Committee to consider and support LD 40, as it represents a positive and progressive step towards a more inclusive and fair regulatory framework for the cannabis industry in Maine.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Stanley Hollenbeck