

Elija Mazza
Lewiston
LD 40

Hello Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed members of the VLA Committee. My name is Elija Mazza, and I've been a general manager of cannabis stores for a few years now. I've been transferred between 3 medical locations and one adult use location. As a very active member of the cannabis community in Maine, I strongly encourage the Committee to vote in favor of LD 40.

It's disheartening to turn away mothers with babies from our store, a stark contrast to other establishments like liquor stores or pharmacies where such restrictions don't apply. This discrepancy highlights the need for equitable treatment across all industries, without unfairly burdening certain businesses.

Additionally, the requirement for annual fingerprinting feels excessive and burdensome. My fingerprints remain unchanged, yet I am subjected to this practice annually, contributing to a sense of being treated like a criminal. Notably, I've never had to undergo an FBI background check for my job in [industry above]. This redundant requirement not only adds unnecessary costs for businesses but also perpetuates a negative perception of the cannabis industry.

Next, clarifying the authorized conduct of caregivers, as proposed in LD 40, reflects the industry's long-standing operational practices. This clarification is essential for ensuring that caregivers can perform their duties effectively and within the bounds of the law, contributing to a more stable and transparent cannabis industry.

Moreover, seeking approval from the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) for routine tasks like rearranging furniture hampers our merchandising efforts and hurts our business. The constant need for notification on such matters appears excessive. Streamlining these approval processes would allow businesses to operate more efficiently and effectively, ultimately benefiting the entire industry.

We aren't asking for preferential treatment but rather to be treated on par with every other industry. I implore you to pass LD 40, thereby eliminating the stigma embedded in our current statutes. By doing so, you will not only support the growth and success of local businesses but also promote fairness and equity across all industries in Maine.