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LD 40

Hello Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed members of the VLA Committee. My name is Joseph Johnson, and I reside in Auburn, Maine. As an active member of the cannabis community in Maine, I strongly encourage the Committee to vote in favor of LD 40.

Mandating annual fingerprinting for a regulated industry, as seen in our cannabis regulations, appears illogical and burdensome. The necessity of repeatedly providing fingerprints, which inherently remain unchanged over a short time frame, seems to lack a practical basis. This requirement not only imposes a recurring cost and inconvenience on individuals within the industry but also raises questions about its efficacy in ensuring public safety. Unlike certain professions that may necessitate regular background checks, the cannabis sector's insistence on annual fingerprinting is an excessive measure rooted in the stigma.

The imposition of \$100,000 fines within the cannabis industry stands as an impossible burden, particularly for the multitude of small local businesses operating in this sector. Reducing the fine structure is not only a matter of practicality but also a necessity for ensuring fair treatment of businesses with varying scales of operation. While recognizing the need for regulatory oversight, it is essential to align the fine structure with industry realities. The proposed adjustments in LD 40, bringing adult use fines in line with those for medical cannabis, underscore the principle that, irrespective of the purpose, it involves the same plant. This measure acknowledges the economic constraints faced by small local businesses, promoting a balanced and proportionate approach to regulatory penalties within the cannabis industry.

The prevalence of vague and ambiguous language in the existing cannabis statute poses a significant challenge for both regulatory compliance and the fair application of laws within the cannabis industry. LD 40 addresses this critical issue by systematically removing all instances of unclear language, a move that is essential for fostering transparency and consistency. Laws open to interpretation by individual inspectors introduce a level of subjectivity that can lead to inconsistent enforcement and potential biases. By advocating for the elimination of vague language, LD 40 aims to establish a clear and unambiguous regulatory framework. This not only ensures equitable treatment for industry participants but also enhances the predictability of compliance, contributing to a more robust and fair cannabis regulatory environment.

The existing provision allowing the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) to revoke a license for a minor violation without incorporating progressive enforcement mechanisms raises concerns about fairness and the potential for disproportionate penalties within the cannabis industry. LD 40 recognizes the necessity of fixing this gap by proposing a system of progressive enforcement that makes sense for the industry's growth and stability. The suggested changes strike a balance by retaining OCP's authority to penalize bad operators while introducing parameters that prevent unwarranted license revocations. This approach ensures a more nuanced and measured response to regulatory infractions, fostering a robust industry by promoting accountability without subjecting businesses to overly severe consequences for minor violations. The proposed reforms underscore the importance of creating a regulatory framework that is both effective and fair.

To finish up I feel checking IDs at the cash register just makes sense. This change not only eases things for customers but also brings some regularity to the way we do business. Customers don't want to be stopped at the door, and people want to bring their kids in with them just like they can at other places that have to check IDs before purchasing. Businesses and customers alike would appreciate this change.

Thank you for your time, please support LD40.