

Patty Hymanson  
York  
LD 929

Greetings Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the VLA Committee,

My name is Patty Hymanson. I live in York, am a neurologist and past-Representative, Chair of HHS from 2017 to 2020 when medical cannabis was in the jurisdiction of HHS.

I am testifying in opposition to LD 929, An Act to Increase Access to Medical Cannabis for Seniors and Veterans.

People who are older need to review the medical risks of cannabis used as a medicine, before they begin to use it. Reviewing these individual risks and benefits by the medical provider is very important for the older person to understand before they use cannabis for a medical reason. This bill would take away this discussion.

For example, there is developing evidence that daily cannabis use increases heart attacks by 49% and a two-fold increased risk for stroke. (Cannabis is Interfering with the Heart, Medscape, March 17, 2025, review of peer-reviewed studies). In an older person with other medical risk factors for vascular disease, these risks can be additive and an older person starting medical cannabis should be informed. If the older person is immunocompromised, there are risks if the cannabis has toxic molds and they should be informed to buy tested products.

According to medical reports I have read, older adults use medical cannabis primarily for pain, insomnia, and anxiety. Agitation in people with dementia is a smaller subset. (<https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/view/age-cannabis-has-arrived-issues-older-adults>). Studies proving benefit are a mixed bag although anecdotal data with people reporting benefit can't be denied.

It is just that older people start with potential vulnerabilities in their brains, arteries, lungs, drug-to-drug interactions, and should review their risks and benefits before starting medical cannabis. That is the purpose of the written certification "signed by a medical provider...that states that, in the medical provider's professional opinion, the patient is likely to receive therapeutic or palliative benefit from the medical use of cannabis to treat or alleviate the patient's medical diagnosis or symptoms associated with the medical diagnosis" (22 MRSA p2421-A, sub-p54). A benefit can not be something that harms them and the patient should understand that.

Thank you for your public service.

Patty Locuratolo Hymanson, MD, FAAN  
Maine State Representative 2015-2022