

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee On Veterans and Legal Affairs.

My name is Jay Orser and I am 20 years old. I work for Students Empowered to End Dependency (SEED) and I am a trained Peer Recovery Specialist.

I am testifying in favor of LD 1847 and LD 104, which would require testing and tracking in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program and prioritize efforts to reduce youth cannabis use.

I started using alcohol and marijuana when I was a freshman in high school. Alcohol was bad but marijuana was worse. It led me to not wanting to live and making multiple attempts on my life. As an eighteen-year-old, I was forced into rehab to avoid jail time and I was very fortunate to make it through the rehab. I am now 2 years and 8 months sober. Marijuana nearly destroyed my brain and I still suffer from memory issues, but I'm getting much better.

In the last two years I have made over 100 school presentations as a SEED Student Presenter. I talk with a lot of teens. The MIYHS data show that two-thirds of teens think marijuana is safe to use. This is the message our state seems to be promoting and kids have bought it hook, line and sinker. I have yet to meet a student, or an adult for that matter, who have any idea how high the THC dosage is in their concentrated THC products. It is also amazing to me how uninformed adults are. I have yet to meet an adult who knows any of the following terms, "greening out," "dabbing," "blinking," "wax," "shatter," "blossom," "T-Break," These are cannabis street terms and parents would be horrified if they understood them. In fact, I don't think a lawmaker should vote on marijuana legislation without first understanding these terms.

I have seen, among many peers, and experienced personally the wreckage caused by high potency marijuana and every week we meet more kids at ever decreasing ages who are following this dangerous path. It's naïve to think that marijuana is an adult product. Kids will emulate adults and marijuana is very easy to get. Getting a med card for any reason is a snap in Maine.

For some reason, adults think that they can push addictive products because it's good for business and tax revenue and then stand back and say, "use responsibly" and that somehow frees them of any responsibility. In my short life, I have met and lost many friends and acquaintances who started with marijuana and moved onto harder drugs. Please stop telling people, marijuana isn't a gateway drug. It is the very definition of a gateway. We share with students the research that shows that marijuana use before age 18 is the number one factor associated with developing an opioid use disorder. Sadly, most kids simply don't believe it because it's counter to what they are being taught at home and on the street.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jay Orser