

Testimony In Opposition to:

L.D. 1840

An Act to Amend the Maine Medical Use of Cannabis Act

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

May 5, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Malina Dumas. I am a partner at Dentons and am here on behalf of Cannabis Association of Maine (CannabisME) to speak in opposition to L.D. 1840.

L.D. 1840 could remove critical public health and safety provisions as well as local oversight provisions that are essential for maintaining public trust and protecting the integrity of the medical cannabis program.

Eliminating Health and Safety Oversight for Hazardous Extraction

Allowing cannabis extraction using inherently hazardous substances, such as butane or propane, without requiring departmental review or specific authorizations would constitute a serious rollback of safeguards designed to protect patients, workers, and communities.

Cannabis extraction using volatile chemicals is a high-risk industrial process that, without proper oversight, can result in explosions, fires, and exposure to toxic compounds.

For example, butane is highly flammable and poses significant dangers when used in extraction processes. Its low boiling point and vapor pressure mean that even a tiny spark or heat source can trigger a catastrophic butane hash oil explosion in a lab environment with inadequate ventilation and safety measures. Inadequate ventilation can lead to the accumulation of butane vapors in confined spaces. Even when done correctly, extraction creates an explosive atmosphere, and when proper safety protocols are not in place, such as static-resistant equipment and protective gear, risks for lab workers and facilities are compounded, making the process even more dangerous.

Just this year in Stevensville, Maryland, an explosion at a licensed cannabis facility during extraction with butane and propane injured two workers and caused over \$250,000 in damages. The incident necessitated the evacuation of nearby properties.

Safety standards are not just red tape. They are fundamental protections that separate a responsible, professional industry from an underground, dangerous one. We urge the Legislature to retain the Department's authority to evaluate and approve hazardous extraction operations to ensure they are conducted safely and in compliance with best practices.

Undermining Local Control and Municipal Oversight

L.D. 1840 not only eliminates the Department's use of a standard form to confirm municipal approval, it also appears to remove the requirement for any local approval or authorization entirely for certain medical cannabis businesses renewing their licenses.

Under this bill, a caregiver store, dispensary, testing facility, or manufacturing facility would be automatically "deemed" compliant with local approval requirements even if the municipality has not provided any such authorization. This change applies so long as the business is in the same municipality and meets other non-local criteria.

This is an alarming shift. It disrespects municipal authority and violates Maine's longstanding principle of local control and undermines the ability of towns to make decisions about cannabis operations within their borders. We strongly oppose this rollback of municipal oversight and urge the Committee to preserve the current requirement for affirmative local approval as part of the Department's renewal process.

As cannabis business owners, we support reasonable regulations that ensure safety, clarity, and accountability. L.D. 1840 goes too far in deregulating two critical areas of the medical program: hazardous extraction safety and local oversight, both of which have been in place since 2018.

We ask the Committee to reject this bill and instead work with stakeholders to develop rules that protect both public health and the long-term success of Maine's cannabis economy.