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May 5, 2025

Re: LD 1847, An Act to Institute Testing and Tracking of Medical Use Cannabis and Cannabis Products Similar to Adult Use Cannabis and Cannabis Products, Dedicate a Portion of the Adult Use Cannabis Sales and Excise Tax to Medical Use Cannabis Programs and Create a Study Group

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

I am John Hudak, Director of the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) and I am before you today in strong support of the goals of LD 1847, a bill that will increase medical cannabis patients' access to tracked and tested medicine, reduce accidental ingestions of adult use cannabis, and provide lawmakers and public health professionals with the information they need to make smart policies to reduce youth cannabis consumption. We are grateful to the sponsor for calling attention to the real public health and safety risks posed by the lack of tracking and testing in the State's medical cannabis program and for putting patients and children at the center of this discussion. While there are some differences in our approaches to addressing these important issues, it is clear that we are united with the growing chorus of voices from across the state who agree with Governor Mills that "the time has come to better regulate the medical market with testing and tracking requirements so that those consumers – just like recreational users – can be confident that those products are safe."

We have provided ample information in our testimony for LD 104 that details the real risk that untracked, contaminated cannabis poses to medical cannabis patients, and we encourage you to consider those comments in evaluating all of the proposals before you today that touch upon testing and tracking of cannabis, medical or otherwise. For now, I simply want to encourage you to contemplate the clear evidence before you today of the growing, broad support for the kinds of critically necessary changes to bring Maine's medical cannabis operators out of the shadows and ensure that medical cannabis patients know their cannabis is not contaminated with pesticides, heavy metals, or harmful microbials. Give due consideration to the cannabis business owners who come before you today to stand up for the kind of transparency that inventory tracking will bring to the medical cannabis program—even though those stakeholders will likely be denigrated and vilified by those who resist reasonable business regulations yet have no firsthand experience using any closed loop inventory tracking system. Ask yourself, absent inventory tracking and testing, how can medical cannabis patients in our state know for sure they are not consuming cannabis from an illicit cultivation facility grown under abhorrent conditions? How will medical cannabis patients know whether they are consuming a pesticide or heavy metal that could diminish the impact of their other medical treatments or induce acute and/or chronic effects?

One thing we must object to is the use of Adult Use Cannabis Program funds for public health education about medical cannabis. At present, LD 1847 contemplates the use of funds derived from adult use cannabis revenues for public health programs related to the medical use of cannabis program and while we agree with the goals of that provision, it is more appropriate to fund those activities from the Medical Use of Cannabis Fund, an “other special revenue fund” created for the purposes specified in 22 MRS § 2430. The adult use and medical cannabis programs are distinct from one another in both purpose and funding, so we would urge you to consider how best to fund those activities.

In closing, I want to thank the sponsor for bringing this bill forward and thank the committee for its careful consideration of the important issues of public health and safety raised by this proposal. I am happy to take any questions you may have.