

Eben Sumner
West Baldwin
LD 1942

Submitted Testimony on LD 1942 – An Act to Modify Taxes Applying to Adult Use Cannabis, Hemp, and Hemp Products

Dear Members of the Committee on Taxation,

My name is Eben Sumner. I am a Maine resident, the owner and operator of Casco Bay Hemp, a hemp cannabinoid manufacturing business, and an active participant in policy discussions around cannabis and hemp regulation in our state. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on LD 1942, and I write today in strong opposition to the provision imposing a 20% excise tax on hemp and hemp-derived products that contain THC.

This proposed tax is deeply flawed, both in principle and in execution. While the bill is framed as a measure to "balance" cannabis taxation, using hemp-derived wellness products to subsidize a tax cut for adult use cannabis is both misguided and unjust.

1. Taxation Without Representation

Maine has no regulatory framework for hemp-derived cannabinoid products beyond agricultural oversight. There is no licensing, no inspections, no enforcement body—yet this bill proposes a massive 20% tax.

Imposing a tax on a sector without establishing a corresponding regulatory structure is taxation without representation. It places a disproportionate burden on Maine's small hemp businesses, who are given no seat at the table, no protections, and no clear guidance, yet are expected to contribute significantly more in taxes.

2. Punitive and Disconnected from Public Health Goals

LD 1942 is effectively punishing hemp producers—many of whom manufacture non-intoxicating, wellness-focused products—for the financial benefit of the adult use cannabis market. This is not sound policy. Hemp products and adult-use cannabis serve different consumers, different purposes, and operate under entirely different oversight structures.

If Maine policymakers wish to improve public health, safety, and tax fairness, the solution is not to quietly impose the highest cannabinoid tax in the country on small, mostly unregulated wellness producers. The solution is thoughtful regulation, stakeholder engagement, and proportional taxation.

3. Discouraging Compliance and Innovation

This move sends a chilling message to Maine entrepreneurs, including myself, who have worked hard to build compliant, science-forward hemp businesses. At a time when we should be encouraging safe, transparent production, LD 1942 creates a disincentive for businesses to operate in the open. Many will simply choose to leave the state—or the legal market altogether.

I urge this committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 1942. It is a punitive measure with no regulatory basis, no public health justification, and no fairness in its application. Maine should not target one sector of the cannabis economy to subsidize another, especially when that sector lacks the very oversight that would justify such a tax.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eben Sumner

Founder & CEO, Casco Bay Hemp

Board Member, Maine Craft Cannabis Association

Board Member, Biddeford/Saco Chamber of Commerce

Member Seed2Health

Member National Industrial Hemp Council

West Baldwin, ME