



## **Maine Chiefs of Police Association**

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### **Statement in opposition of**

### **L.D. 1365, An Act to Allow Adult Use Cannabis Stores to Operate Cannabis Consumption Lounges**

### **Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs**

**February 4, 2026**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and honorable members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Scott Stewart. I am the Chief of the Brunswick Police Department, and the president of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am providing testimony on behalf of the Association in opposition of LD 1365.

The Maine Chiefs of Police Association's mission is straightforward: to strengthen the working relationships among Maine's police leaders, to promote professionalism and consistent standards across the state, and to support the men and women who serve our communities every day. At the heart of that mission is a shared commitment to protecting life and property and upholding the values of our profession.

This bill would authorize on-premises cannabis consumption lounges at licensed adult-use cannabis stores beginning January 1, 2028, including the option to allow smoking in a separately enclosed and ventilated area, subject to municipal authorization and Office of Cannabis Policy endorsement. It also creates a cannabis server education framework and a Cannabis Liability Act modeled on liquor liability concepts.

MCOPA's objection is straightforward: this bill expands access to immediate, high-dose consumption in a commercial setting without Maine having a clear, enforceable statutory THC impairment limit for driving. That gap matters.

With alcohol, enforcement and deterrence are anchored by a well-understood per se standard. With cannabis, impairment does not present the same way, it does not track cleanly with a simple number, and without a statutory limit, the burden shifts heavily to subjective observations, specialized evaluations, and courtroom battles—every time.

The amendment specifically contemplates on-site consumption of products purchased at the store and expressly contemplates smoking where allowed. That creates a predictable downstream effect: more people leaving a retail location after consuming THC and getting behind the wheel—some knowingly, some thinking they’re “fine,” and some because they have no plan for transportation.

If Maine is going to expand “point-of-consumption” access, it must also expand the legal and practical tools to prevent THC-impaired driving—and right now, that toolbox is incomplete.

A lounge is not a living room—commercial settings change behavior. A private residence is one thing. A commercial lounge environment is another. Even with rules like “no service to visibly intoxicated persons,” “server education,” and “public service campaigns,” the reality is:

- THC impairment can be harder to recognize in real time than alcohol impairment, especially with edibles and varying potencies.
- “Visibly intoxicated” is a high threshold and a litigation magnet.
- People will still make the same bad choice humans have made forever: “It’s only a short drive.”

And unlike alcohol, there is no universally accepted field metric that juries immediately understand. That makes enforcement harder, prosecution harder, and deterrence weaker.

Municipal opt-in doesn’t fix the statewide roadway problem. We recognize the bill gives municipalities authority to allow or restrict lounges. But impaired drivers don’t stay neatly inside municipal boundaries. A lounge in one town can become a crash in the next town over meaning every community’s law enforcement and EMS bears the risk whether they voted for it or not.

The bill adds programs, but not the missing enforcement foundation. The amendment creates a training structure (cannabis server education) and contemplates a public service campaign. Those are not bad ideas. But they’re not substitutes for the key missing pieces:

- A clear statutory impairment framework (or an enforceable standard that holds up consistently).
- Dedicated funding for DRE/ARIDE training, overtime details, crash reconstruction capacity, and drug toxicology processing.

- A transportation/exit plan requirement that actually works (not just “assist” someone who is visibly intoxicated). Data collection and reporting tied to OUI-drug enforcement and crashes connected to lounge operations

Right now, the bill asks Maine to open the spigot first and “figure out the plumbing later.” That’s not how public safety should work.

On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, we urge the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1365 as amended.

If the Committee is determined to move forward, MCOPA urges you to delay implementation until Maine enacts and funds a comprehensive impaired-driving framework specific to cannabis—because expanding consumption venues without that is asking patrol officers, prosecutors, and crash victims to absorb the risk.