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LD 365 Graduated Sanctions Hearing 11am, March 3, 2023

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica and all Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee Member. My name is Susan Meehan. I live in Sweden Maine. I represent the Cannabis Council of Maine, a consensus group of four large cannabis advocacy groups in Maine. I am a Registered Identification Cardholder and a patient in the Maine Medical Use of Cannabis Program.

Seven years ago this week, I testified with my 13 year old daughter standing by my side, in Hartford Connecticut to beg Cyndimae's home state to legalize pediatric medical use of cannabis so she could legally travel home to her many cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents.... Driving from our home in Augusta Maine that day, we illegally crossed 3 state lines (twice), and we illegally took Cyndimae's medicine bag with her seizure rescue formulation into the Hartford Connecticut statehouse. The police officer ironically gave Cyndimae a junior sheriff's sticker and her smile lit up that copper dome – stickers were one way to her heart. Connecticut legislators knew Cyndimae, but that day they met a new child, one able to walk and talk and answer their questions. They knew Cyndimae pre-cannabis in a wheelchair and drugged into a nearly constant seizure stupor by legal pharmaceuticals. They witnessed the miracle of cannabis that day. Cyndimae returned home to Connecticut and the Mohegan reservation 10 days later for the last time – this time, legally, death certificate in my hand. The Connecticut bill was posthumously named the Cyndimae Law in October 2016. My advocacy for this plant is always in Cyndimae's honor especially this time of year.

With the help of my colleagues, I request this amendment to Ld 365 to create a bonafide sanctions plan in this industry in Maine to protect the public and to protect the industry I love from the intimidating tactics of contracted entrapment and intimidation, and to promote public safety by requiring more immediate correction of issues. I do not understand. Cannabis money is paying the wages of this regulating agency. Last year when a fiscal note was requested on Ld1242, we the industry said, no need, use program funds – yes hire half a dozen more inspectors and administrative staff to protect the public safety and to help us operate our businesses in compliance.

We did not say, "Contract retired licensed law enforcement to sting op us out of business." We did not say that the regulating agency of the State of Maine, paid directly from the medical and now adult cannabis funds laundered clean through td bank – "Take those funds and set us up and put us out of business." We were in error trusting that more compliance inspectors would mean a better program. We assumed the Department would lead and protect the industry that funds their paychecks. And then came October 7th and a terribly misguided guidance document. You will note in this Graduated Sanctions plan the Department is reminded to issue referrals to regulating agencies of tobacco, food, agriculture, etc. The Department exists to regulate cannabis not tobacco, not food. It is time to help businesses into compliance, not out of business. We do hope under new leadership that we see a new light, and we do hope it is before more and more of our colleagues close their doors. Approximately 1000 lost in the last year.

We see the error of our ways, and we beseech the Legislature for this Graduated Sanctions plan, composed by industry stakeholders. We again need your protection. I am happy to answer any questions about the amendment language or my testimony.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Meehan

Cannabis Council of Maine

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