

**Testimony of Julia MacDonald, Government Relations Director,  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**

**In Opposition to LD 1952 “An Act to Allow On-site Cannabis Consumption”**

**January 22, 2024**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. My name is Julia MacDonald, and I am the Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) in Maine. ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. As the nation’s leading advocate for public policies that are helping to defeat cancer, ACS CAN ensures that cancer patients, survivors, and their families have a voice in public policy matters at all levels of government.

I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1952. ACS CAN opposes the smoking or aerosolization, including vaporization of marijuana and other cannabinoids in public places because the carcinogens in marijuana smoke poses numerous health risks to the person using the product and others in the person's presence.

Marijuana smoke, like tobacco smoke, is a lung irritant and can pose significant risks to people who use marijuana and to those near those who are using it. Marijuana smoke contains many of the cancer-causing and toxic substances found in tobacco smoke, including mercury, ammonia, cyanide, lead & formaldehyde and contain hazardous fine particles that pose a significant health risk to non-smokers. Marijuana smoke contains the same fine particulate matter found in tobacco smoke that can cause heart attacks.<sup>1</sup> Further, individuals under the age of 45 who frequently smoke marijuana (defined as 4 or more times in the past 30 days) are almost twice as likely as those who don’t smoke marijuana to have a heart attack.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, marijuana smoke has been shown to cause testicular cancer. The presence of cancer-causing substances is cause for concern and more research is needed to assess the impact of exposure to marijuana smoke on other types of cancer.

Due to of the risks posed by smoking or aerosolization of marijuana, it is important that we keep marijuana consumption in line with Maine’s existing smoke free laws. Title 22, Chapter 262 prohibits smoking in public places with very few exceptions. Smoking is defined as: “‘Smoking’ includes carrying or having in one's possession a lighted or heated cigarette, cigar or pipe or a lighted or heated tobacco or plant product intended for human consumption through inhalation whether natural or synthetic in any manner or in any form. ‘Smoking’ includes the use of an

---

<sup>1</sup> Brook, R.D., Rajagopalan, S., Pope, C.A., 3rd, Brook, J.R., Bhatnagar, A., Diez-Roux, A.V., Holguin, F., Hong, Y., Luepker, R.V., Mittleman, M.A., Peters, A., Siscovick, D., Smith, S.C., Jr., Whitset, L., and Kaufman, J.D. (2010). Particulate matter air pollution and cardiovascular disease: An update to the scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation* 121: 2331-78

<sup>2</sup> Ladha KS, Mistry N, Wijesundera DN, et al. Recent cannabis use and myocardial infarction in young adults: a cross-sectional study. *CMAJ* September 2021; 193 (35) E1377-E1384; <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.202392>.

electronic smoking device.” The similar hazards posed by marijuana smoke make it imperative that our smoke-free laws protect against marijuana smoke.

Of note, there has been interest in the use of marijuana to treat cancer-related symptoms, including chemotherapy induced nausea, vomiting and pain. To date, four THC-based drugs have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of nausea, and several other similar drugs are being tested in clinical trials. None of the FDA-approved drugs require the smoking or aerosolizing of the drug.<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons, we urge you to support the protection of our existing smoke-free laws by continuing to prohibit the smoking or aerosolization of cannabis in public places. We appreciate your time and consideration of our comments. I would be happy to answer any questions about this testimony.

---

<sup>3</sup> FDA. FDA and Cannabis: Research and Drug Approval Process. October 1, 2020. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-andcannabis-research-and-drug-approval-process>.