



CITY OF BANGOR

Testimony of Jamie Comstock,
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Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

Testimony in Opposition to:

LD 1952: An Act to Allow On-Site Cannabis Consumption

LD 2147: An Act to Remove the Requirement for Edible Cannabis Products to be Stamped or Embossed on Each Serving with a Universal Symbol

Hearing Date: January 24, 2024

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Jamie Comstock. I am the Health Promotion Manager at the City of Bangor's Public Health and Community Services Department and I am speaking on behalf of the City of Bangor in opposition to LD 1952 and LD 2147. On January 22, 2024 the Bangor City Council voted to oppose these bills; the vote was split with the majority in favor of opposing the bills.

LD 952 proposes to allow on-site cannabis consumption, which is something our state is simply not ready to enact.

The Maine Office of Cannabis Policy's (OCP) Cannabis Markets and Associated Outcomes Report released in Spring 2022 reported that 28% of survey respondents drive while under the influence of cannabis¹. LD 1952 would likely increase the risk that people drive while under the influence of cannabis. There are currently no reliable tools to assess cannabis impairment, and no nationally accepted baseline for impairment like there is for alcohol (in the case of alcohol it is a blood alcohol concentration of .08%). Additionally, we know that cannabis and alcohol are metabolized differently in the body. While the liver metabolizes alcohol at a very constant rate of one drink per hour, inhaled cannabis may impair essential driving skills for between 6-8 hours and edibles may impair those same skills for 8-12 hours.²

¹ Maine Office of Cannabis Policy Cannabis Markets and Associated Outcomes- Survey Findings and Implications (Spring 2022)

² Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (n.d.). Cannabis Public Health Statements- Driving . Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from <https://marijuanahealthreport.colorado.gov/literature-review/public-health-statements>

Using simple formulas that take into account the number of drinks consumed within a specified time frame, people drinking alcohol can estimate their current BAC and therefore, make educated assumptions about whether it is legal/safe for them to drive a car. Reliable, corresponding information for cannabis is not available.

In Maine we have two important tools in place to increase the safety of establishments where people use alcohol. The first is dram shop liability, whereby vendors can be held liable for the actions of an intoxicated patron if the vendor negligently or recklessly serves alcohol to a person who is underage or who is visibly intoxicated. Dram shop liability does not exist for establishments that sell cannabis in Maine.

The second is responsible vendor training which teaches servers to responsibly serve and sell alcoholic beverages and to mitigate alcohol-related harm. The city of Bangor requires that every server and seller of alcohol in the city have this training (which is provided by Bangor Public Health and Community Services staff) as a condition of their local alcohol license. This type of training does not yet exist for cannabis in Maine.

LD 1952 also conflicts with Maine's smoke free laws, which tightly restrict smoking in public places to reduce the health harms of second-hand smoke. Similarly, cannabis smoke contains carcinogens and other toxic substances that can harm the user and those around them. As such, in line with Maine's existing smoke-free laws, we need to continue to prohibit smoking or aerosolization of cannabis in public places.

Enacting LD 1952 without the tools to detect and measure impairment, and in the absence of liability and training safeguards is irresponsible.

I am also testifying in opposition to LD 2147. This bill would remove the requirement that edible cannabis products be stamped or embossed on each serving with a universal symbol in order to be sold or offered for sale.

The universal symbol on products that mimic non-cannabis edible products is an important aspect of consumer information and consumer protection. It helps prevent accidental ingestion by adults or adults accidentally putting products in the reach of minors. The symbol serves as an important public health protection and is a standard in other states with active medical and retail cannabis markets.

Maine's cannabis industry should be as safe as possible for both consumers and the public; neither of these bills increases safety. I urge you to vote no on both LD 1952 and LD 2147.

Thank you for your time and attention. I'd be pleased to take any questions.

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