

Monday, March 4th, 2024

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supeca and Members of the Committee. My name is Kristi Shaw, I live in Charleston. I'm a caregiver, a board member of Medical Marijuana Caregivers of Maine and the president of the Maine Womens Cannabiz Council

I'd like to urge the committee to pass LD 40

My husband and I have been caregivers in the medical program since 2016. We have a small family run cultivation facility. We have been doing this for quite a while now and readily welcome any solutions in statute that streamline administrative burden and costs to small grows like ours. Securing the right to share our craft with legal consumers through trade shows, farmers markets, private events etc is a needed lifeline for smaller cannabis businesses, and would move Maine toward being a top cannabis tourism destination. These are just a couple of the possible fixes in this bill, I will be submitting written testimony with more specific points at a later date.

Thank you Senator Hickman for listening to our stories, seeing us as a legitimate agricultural industry and sponsoring this bill. Your leadership is greatly appreciated.

Mostly, I'd like to thank the advocates in this room who take time out of their busy schedules to help guide this process. We are all incredibly busy trying to run our businesses, it is really quite a special thing when we all come out and flex our civic muscle.

We give our lives to this plant because we believe in it. We've seen the good that cannabis brings to our own lives, as well as those that we are privileged to care for. We've seen the medical benefits, the quick-start pain relief, the shifted depression, the joy on our patrons' faces when they see us coming. We know cannabis is not a "dangerous substance", because we have the empirical evidence of our lives and those we've served all these years to show for it.

So again and again we defend our rights to exist, as designated Essential Businesses.

Cannabis is Maines most valuable agricultural crop, paying millions in taxes and bringing thousands of jobs to the state every year. We are a devoted work force that serves cancer patients and sick kids and people living with ptsd, and chronic pain, anxiety and insomnia - and making all their lives considerably better.

We are an underground culture that persisted through the drug war and prohibition, and are in fact the only reason there is a "cannabis industry" today.

And we're also moms and dads, PTA members and coaches, friends and neighbors... just regular people trying to make a living doing what we love. We deserve some respect. There's a saying that goes "Legislation is decided by those who show up" Thank you for showing up.