



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Elizabeth M. Caruso

P.O. Box 81
Caratunk, ME 04925
Residence: (207) 399-9992
Elizabeth.Caruso@legislature.maine.gov

Testimony In Support of LD 347 - An Act to Provide Qualifying Municipalities a Percentage of Adult Use Cannabis Sales Tax and Excise Tax Revenue

February 12, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Elizabeth Caruso. I live in Caratunk, and I represent House District 72 representing 9 towns and 20 townships and unorganized territories of northern Somerset County. I am providing testimony in support of LD 347.

I have served the Town of Caratunk as the selectboard chair for the last 19 years, having been first elected in 2006 as the First Selectman. In 2022, I was also elected to the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee to represent the 36 towns of Senate District 5. Throughout these years of municipal service, I have become acquainted with the day-to-day logistical operations as well as the uniqueness of Maine's varying municipal operations based on geographics and populations. Cannabis operations within municipalities have been a hot topic for some time.

Caratunk's legislative body, following a moratorium, enacted a Marijuana Ordinance in 2017 which prohibited retail operations. The reasons were varied: we are remotely rural; our municipal officers are all part-time and work other jobs; and absent present/local law enforcement, we completely rely on the limited staffing of the county sheriff department and/or even less present state police. I explain this all to affirm my support of this bill which only sends revenue sharing to towns that **opt-in** to cannabis operations.

However, there are many rural towns that took a different approach and allowed retail Cannabis operations, and therefore, must navigate issues around zoning, permitting, public infrastructure, public safety, etc. Whether their municipal offices are staffed part-time or full-time, whether they are rural or urban, whether they have their own code enforcement officer or share a CEO with other towns (such as Caratunk does), or whether they have local law enforcement or must coordinate with the county, all municipalities have to navigate retail Cannabis operations successfully, effectively, and safely.

Municipalities with Cannabis operations in their jurisdiction are tasked with evaluating, permitting and approving site locations, yearly monitoring (including on-premise visits by the CEO and fire chiefs), license renewals, filling out town portions of the state license renewals, and all related correspondences within the town in regards to the Cannabis operations. Compensating towns that opt-in by providing proportional revenue sharing does not only make sense, but it encourages participation while supporting a safer and healthier industry.

Municipal officers juggle a lot, and Cannabis consumes time that could be used on other activities. I support LD 347 because it directly compensates the **very municipalities which allow this industry to exist**, but the compensation is in a **manner and measure proportional to where the Cannabis revenue is generated.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share and for your careful consideration of the local government perspective

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