

LD 584

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Good morning, Chair and committee members. My name is Matthew Bayliss. I'm a Cumberland resident, a registered caregiver for over ten years, and I recently surrendered my adult-use cultivation license under duress. I'm here to testify in support of LD 584, requiring Senate approval for the OCP Director. Six weeks after the Office of Cannabis Policy launched under Director Gunderson, I began dozens of candid conversations with them about how small businesses could navigate new rules, regulations, taxes, and burdens. When the market opened in October 2020, I was one of the first licensees—and one of the smallest. Within months, I warned them their system would crush small operators. They agreed, promised revisions to ease the load, but never delivered.

That load hit hard with Metrc, the track-and-trace system—sloppy, with poor customer service, and too expensive to maintain. It's a key reason I left the program. I raised this in multiple stakeholder meetings with OCP higher-ups. Their response? 'We don't like Metrc either, but they're our vendor—what can we do?' That's not accountability; it's resignation. Meanwhile, Metrc's pocketed nearly a million dollars from OCP contracts under John Hudak, the current director. Hudak co-founded Freedman & Koski, a firm that consulted for Maine—one partner's now at Metrc. The other, Andrew Freedman, created CPEAR in D.C., lobbying for giants like Altria—big tobacco betting on cannabis. Hudak himself worked at CPEAR before coming to Maine to lead OCP.

Maine law demands avoiding even the *appearance* of a conflict. When your past ties profit from decisions crushing small growers, and D.C. lobbyists for corporate heavyweights loom, that's a red flag. Altria isn't here for caregivers—they want market control. Senate approval could've vetted this: Are you here for Maine's small operators or corporate boardrooms? Right now, it feels like the latter. Fees, rules, Metrc's costs—they favor big players, not the little guys and gals who built this industry, many testifying before you today.

The OCP Director wields huge power: contracts, regulations, livelihoods. Senate oversight ensures they answer to us, not just the governor. Trust's low—see the 'Fire John Hudak' movement or the Oversight Committee's probe. My story's proof: promises broken, small businesses sidelined, a system rigged for scale. LD 584 is about fairness—giving Maine's cannabis community a voice in who leads us. It's a chance to stop corporate creep and protect what we've built. Please vote yes. I'd be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.