

Testimony Against LD903: An Act to Regulate the Advertising of Cannabis Products

Maine Legislative Committee on Veterans & Legal Affairs [VLA]

Senate Chair Hickman

House Chair Supica

Senate Minority Lead Chair Timberlake

House Minority Lead Chair Boyer

Good afternoon esteemed members of the committee,

I am writing today in ardent opposition to LD903, a misguided and damaging bill that seeks to cripple Maine's legal cannabis industry by imposing draconian advertising restrictions rooted in outdated stigma rather than sound policy. This bill is not about responsible regulation—it is about silencing an industry that has worked tirelessly to establish legitimacy, safety, and transparency for consumers.

LD903 would all but eliminate our ability to advertise, restricting cannabis businesses to little more than a business directory listing and a website with bare-bones information. Meanwhile, alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical companies continue to advertise freely—products that have far greater documented risks than cannabis. Why is our industry singled out for these oppressive restrictions? Because of lingering, unjustified stigma that refuses to acknowledge cannabis as a legal, regulated product in the state of Maine.

The consequences of this bill are devastating. If we cannot effectively market our products, small, locally owned cannabis businesses—many of whom have invested their life savings into building compliant, reputable operations—will suffer. It is already difficult for small businesses to compete against corporate interests. This bill ensures that only those with deep pockets, pre-existing name recognition, and prime real estate will survive. It will suffocate the small caregivers and craft cultivators who have been the backbone of Maine's cannabis industry for decades.

Furthermore, pushing legal cannabis businesses into the shadows creates public safety risks. Restricting advertising means consumers will struggle to differentiate between licensed, regulated businesses and the unregulated black market. If the goal is to protect public health, transparency and education—not prohibitionist-style censorship—are the answer. The legal cannabis industry has become a significant economic driver in Maine. In 2020, medical cannabis sales in Maine reached \$266 million, surpassing traditional state staples like potatoes and blueberries. This robust performance underscores the medical programs vital role in our economy. In 2022, adult-use cannabis sales nearly doubled from the previous year, totaling approximately \$159 million and generating roughly \$16 million in tax revenue for the state. This

growth continued into 2023, with sales reaching \$217 million and contributing \$21 million in tax revenue. These revenues support the fact that we are essential public services and underscore the industry's role in Maine's economy. Additionally, the industry has created hundreds of direct and indirect jobs, revitalizing local economies and providing employment opportunities across the state. Imposing severe advertising restrictions threatens this progress, undermining a burgeoning sector that offers substantial economic benefits.

LD903 is an unjustified attack on an industry that provides jobs, tax revenue, and safe, tested products to thousands of Mainers. It ignores the fact that responsible advertising helps consumers make informed choices while allowing legal businesses to compete fairly. This bill doesn't move Maine forward—it pushes us backward into the dark days of prohibition.

I urge you to reject LD903 and stand with Maine's cannabis businesses, consumers, and workers. We deserve a fair and equitable regulatory framework, not one rooted in fear and outdated bias.

Kindly

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