

## **Opposing LD 929 – Increasing Access to Medical Cannabis for Seniors and Veterans**

Senator Craig Hickman, Representative Laura Supica, and esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Jennifer Belcher, and I serve as the President of the Maine Cannabis Union, representing caregivers, small business owners, and industry professionals dedicated to maintaining a strong, responsible medical cannabis program.

Today, I am here to express our opposition to LD 929. While we deeply respect and acknowledge the benefits that medical cannabis provides to seniors and veterans, we believe this bill removes essential safeguards that ensure safe and appropriate cannabis use within the medical program.

There is no doubt that cannabis has played a transformative role in improving the quality of life for elderly patients and veterans, particularly in managing chronic pain, PTSD, and other medical conditions. Numerous studies highlight the therapeutic potential of cannabis for these groups, and we strongly support their right to access it. However, what seniors and veterans also have in common is a high likelihood of being prescribed multiple medications and dealing with complex medical conditions.

For this reason, we believe that consulting with a medical provider before obtaining a medical cannabis card is essential. Medical oversight ensures that potential drug interactions, underlying health conditions, and individualized treatment plans are properly considered. Removing this requirement could lead to unintended consequences, including negative drug interactions and missed opportunities for necessary medical intervention.

Additionally, this bill pertains specifically to the medical cannabis program, which is designed to operate with medical guidance. Regardless of age or veteran status, we firmly believe that participation in the medical program should require a medical card and consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to reject LD 929 in its current form. We support expanding access to cannabis in responsible ways, but we must ensure that medical oversight remains a key component of the medical cannabis program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

**Jennifer Belcher**

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