

Good morning Chairmen and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here on LD104 today. I'm Emily Baldwin, owner-operator of Your Maine Plug, a small medical home grow in Aroostook County.

I moved to Maine in 2020 to escape California's burdensome regulations—rules that crippled small farms, large legacy farms, even the state's largest processor, Flow Kana. In 2019-2020, I spent six months trimming northern California's finest outdoor flower in a small facility ran by locals in a very small town. Every employee was part of the local community—either processing their own flower or a neighbor's. My floor manager was well-known in the area, and my head manager brought her own farm's harvest into the very facility she oversaw. This close-knit network, as charming as it sounds, made oversight and accountability nearly impossible. After a couple of months I was being given all of the moldiest flower to trim because my boss thought I did the best job at cleaning it up. Despite this effort, I was repeatedly asked to "trim off less mold," and after completing every batch, I would watch management cherry-pick the best buds for testing.

Ultimately, Flow Kana couldn't sustain itself. When it stopped paying farmers in 2020, it tried to grow its own and was exposed by my boss a year or two later for growing moldy product. Small farms went bankrupt, local economies suffered, and the largest processor collapsed.

Corruption also affects tracking systems. On April 22, [regulatoryoversight.com](https://regulatoryoversight.com) reported that Marcus Estes, former EVP of METRC, is suing the company for retaliation after he was fired for raising the issue of "burner distros" that were illicitly diverting California cannabis out of state. He was told internally that METRC has the technological capacity to flag irregularities but was choosing not to, appearing to prioritize chip revenue over consumer safety. Estes was marginalized from his duties and ultimately fired in early 2024.

These examples show that strict rules mean little if those on the ground don't want to follow them. Over-regulation can be as harmful as under-regulation, driving product—and patients—into the black market. While larger labs and cultivators may absorb the cost of new requirements, small businesses cannot. California's experience demonstrates that even deep-pocketed operators can fail under a system that prioritizes paperwork over product quality.

Patients deserve a safe, reliable legal market. To achieve that, we need balanced regulations—ones that protect consumers without bankrupting the very people who grow and process their medicine. Thank you for your consideration.