

Hebert, Michelle

From: Joel Pepin <joel@jarcannabis.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 6, 2025 8:40 PM
Subject: LD1620 - Supporting Testimony
Attachments: Testimony_LD1620_JoelPepin.pdf

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Hello VLA Members,

My name is Joel Pepin, and I am the owner of JAR Cannabis Company in Lewiston.

Please find attached the public testimony I presented last night regarding LD1620. I want to express my strong support for this bill and thank Representative Boyer for sponsoring it on behalf of the Maine Cannabis Industry Association.

This bill introduces practical testing reforms within the Adult Use program while ensuring the continued protection of public health. Specifically, it proposes increasing the allowable thresholds for mold and yeast bacteria to levels consistent with many other states, allowing for audit testing for operators with a history of consistently passing all required tests, and enabling the speciation of microbes.

If enacted in its current form, this bill would result in significant annual savings for my company, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This would allow us to invest into more benefits for our employees, like health & dental insurance matching and 401k matching.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joel

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Joel Pepin
Co-Founder
JAR Cannabis Co.
(207)333-8171
www.jarcannabis.com

Chairman Hickman, Chairman Supica, and Honorable Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee:

My name is Joel Pepin, and I am the owner of JAR Cannabis Company, a Maine-based adult-use cannabis business. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1620. This bill offers thoughtful, science-based reforms to Maine's cannabis testing regulations, and its passage would have a profoundly positive impact on the health of our industry and the economic viability of businesses like mine.

One of the most important elements of LD 1620 is the creation of an audit testing pathway for licensees who demonstrate consistent compliance. Under this bill, businesses that successfully pass ten consecutive mandatory tests would become eligible for audit testing, reducing the burden of batch-by-batch testing for those with a proven track record of safety. At JAR Cannabis, this change alone would reduce our operating costs by more than a quarter million dollars per year, capital that could instead be invested in improving our facilities, enhancing wages and benefits for our employees, and growing our Maine-based operations.

In addition to lowering costs, this bill would meaningfully improve testing consistency and reliability. Currently, when we send identical product samples to three different state-licensed testing labs, we often receive wildly inconsistent results. These variations delay product rollouts, create confusion for both businesses and regulators, and in some cases, force perfectly safe product to be destroyed or relabeled. LD 1620 addresses this issue by establishing clear microbial limits and focusing mandatory testing only on contaminants that are truly harmful to human health, such as *E. coli*, salmonella, and coliform bacteria.

Another significant benefit of this bill is that it would eliminate the labeling inconsistencies that LD 1567 attempts to address. By standardizing microbial testing protocols and reducing variability in lab results, LD 1620 tackles the root cause of labeling discrepancies—rather than layering on additional regulatory complexity.

Finally, I want to emphasize the environmental and agricultural upside of this legislation. The current microbial contamination threshold—often interpreted by labs and regulators as requiring cannabis to test below a near-sterile 10,000 CFUs—creates a major disincentive for growers using organic cultivation methods and organic integrated pest management (IPM) practices. LD 1620's proposed threshold of 100,000 CFUs better reflects real-world microbiology and would encourage more sustainable, organic farming practices in Maine's cannabis industry without compromising consumer safety. Lastly, it allows for speciation of microbes which is desperately needed in our industry,

LD 1620 is a smart, balanced reform that supports consumer safety, regulatory clarity, and the long-term sustainability of Maine's cannabis businesses. I strongly urge you to support this bill and advance it out of committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration.