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Senator, District 16

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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LD 1455, "An Act to Prevent Illegal Cannabis Growing Operations in the State."
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
Public Hearing
May 8, 2025
9:30am

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

I am Senator Scott Cyrway; I represent District 16, which is comprised of Albion, Fairfield, Oakland, Waterville, and Winslow. I am pleased to present LD 1455, "An Act to Prevent Illegal Cannabis Growing Operations in the State."

If you've been following the news, you know that Maine has been targeted as a base for illegal cannabis cultivation. The existence of these illegal grow houses is a problem all over Maine. The US Department of Homeland Security has identified 270 sites as potential illegal growing operations. Not only do these operations destroy homes through mold and fire, create a tainted product, and infiltrate Maine markets causing a drop in prices; but they are connected to Chinese gangs. Illegal grows are an attack on Maine's cannabis industry, cannabis consumer, home buyer, and the public alike. It is time that we strengthen our laws to help curb this problem.

While we started to understand this problem a few years ago, it still plagues us today. On April first of this year Somerset County Sheriffs busted an illegal grown in Harmony finding about 1400 plants and cash from illicit sales. According to WMTW, Somerset County Sheriffs alone have executed 24 warrants related to illegal cannabis grows.

Just in the past week, we saw an old shoe factory destroyed by fire in Wilton. Fires are common in these facilities, and firefighters are put in harm's way when they are called to battle these fires.

My bill amends the definition of Disqualifying Drug Offense to include unauthorized cultivation or distribution of cannabis. In doing so, it requires for one to be imprisoned for a year or more for operating one of these grow houses. Not only does this measure provide a clear punishment to deter illegal activity, but it also takes a member of a network out of contact with that network, helping to break some of the web of illicit cannabis growers.

My bill also prohibits licenses from being issued to those under investigation for illegal grows by either state or federal authorities and licenses from being issued at places that are under

investigation for being the location of an illegal grow or being found as an illegal grow. In doing so, we can stop these grows before they are started.

Let's work together and end the infiltration of our state by illegal marijuana growers.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to take any questions.