



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Hickman and Representative Supica and esteemed members of the VLA Committee.

The Maine Cannabis Industry needs our help. There is a sprawling network of organized crime which has entered the cannabis market and both public safety and public health are at risk. We need stronger federal, state and local law coordination to eradicate the insurgence of organized crime in Maine's Cannabis industry. LD 1609 is "An Act to Prevent the Participation of Individuals and Companies linked to Federally Recognized Criminal Organizations in the Medical and Adult Use Cannabis Programs."

In the recent years criminal enterprises have penetrated rural Maine and purchased farms, single dwellings, old churches, warehouses and retrofitted these structures into cannabis cultivation sites. They have established illegal grows, under the radar: filthy, unregulated and unlicensed settings. The Department of Homeland Security has information which indicates that more than 200 grows are linked to the Asian Transnational criminal organizations. Organizations which have a history of drug trafficking inclusive of fentanyl, human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, violence and other crimes.

As of late, their brazen scheme is to attain medical registration from OCP and once found in registration violation at the location, the violator is expelled and immediately another individual is presented for licensure at the same location. The registered violator is banished and another readied up and granted registration at the same site. It is a sophisticated and well-funded network.

The Director of OCP recently testified before us that our law enforcement agencies have recognized activities linked to transnational criminal organizations. He also affirmed that these groups are exploiting Maine's medical and adult use cannabis programs for illicit gain. Others complain of the use of toxic chemicals and forced labor used in these grows, environmental damage, violence and more.



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LD 1609 will require OCP to deny a registration to any person associated with organized crime as identified by state or federal law enforcement agencies within the prior five years of application. It requires the office of OCP to deny registration at a physical location known to be associated with organized crime within five years and it requires the office to revoke for a period of five years a registrant if the person or location is known to be associated with organized crime.