

Email



Written Testimony of Ben Edwards in Support of L.D. 1920.

An Act to Prohibit the Sale of Potentially Intoxicating Hemp Products to a Person Under 21 Years of Age

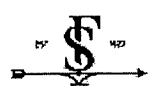
May 15, 2025

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee:

My name is Ben Edwards, I own and operate the Schoppee Farm in Machias, Maine. We are a certified organic, nine generation, family owned and run farm that, among other things, grows hemp and creates full spectrum hemp based products.

I want to first thank my representative Tiffany Strout for putting this bill forward for myself and my fellow hemp farmers. And second I would like to thank this body for continuing to hear hemp bills year after year. This bill endeavor's to do two things. First clarify a primary problem in the hemp industry that is the reason myself and many of my fellow hemp farmers find ourselves back here every year. And second implement the findings of the hemp working group this body commissioned during last years session.

This bill creates a clear differentiation between the non-intoxicating, full spectrum, hemp products that are natural medicine and the engineered intoxicating hemp products that have proliferated of late, and are usually intended to be recreational. It is these intoxicating hemp products that are frequently the target of legislation because they compete with the marijuana markets and we would like non-intoxicating medicinal hemp products to not be a casualty of that battle. I have attached my testimony from last year about LD 1996, a bill that is an excellent example of this very problem



LD 1996 was the catalyst for the formation of the hemp working group. The hemp working groups primary, consensus, finding last year was that intoxicating hemp products should be 21 plus. While this may not be a complete solution to the issue of intoxicating hemp. Given the continued uncertainty of the federal farm bill and the state by state adjustments that are being made. I do believe this is the appropriate step currently for Maine. It protects our children, it makes sure we don't undermine a small but important industry in our state.

There are thousands of people in Maine alone that depend on our non-intoxicating hemp products, including many children. This industry provides at least hundreds of jobs in Maine, many in very impoverished areas of the state. Like my farm, located in Machias, with the lowest per capita income of any municipality in the state. This bill allows the industry to continue to move forward and protects hemp farmers and creators of full spectrum medical hemp products, while still implementing needed protection for Maine children. I hope you will consider supporting it. I would be more than happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Benjamin C. Edwards



Email



**Written Testimony of Ben Edwards in Opposition to L.D. 1996,
An Act to Regulate Synthetic Hemp-derived Cannabinoids**

January 30, 2024

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee:

My name is Ben Edwards, I own and operate the Schoppee Farm in Machias, Maine. We are a certified organic 8th generation family owned and run farm that, among other things, grows hemp and creates hemp based products. LD 1996 in its original, and amended form, will make every product we produce illegal, and will put our farm out of business.

I have two very young children, my wife is a teacher, and I share Senator Pierce's concerns about children having unrestricted access to intoxicating substances. At Schoppee Farm we grow hemp to create organic, full spectrum, medicinal products. We do not, and have never, created delta 8, delta 10, and HHC extracts or products.

The products we make are safe. If they were not, you would be hearing a huge public outcry, but you are not. What you are hearing is an outcry from the lobbyists for big marijuana.

I am a big believer in the wisdom of time. We have at least centuries of experience with the cannabis plant with elevated levels of Delta 9 THC. We do not have much more than a few years of experience with elevated levels of Delta 8, Delta 10, and HHC. These compounds do occur naturally in cannabis in small amounts. While it appears that even in large amounts they are likely safe, we do not have long term data to back this up. And in the spirit of this bill, we do not know the long term effects on children. I am absolutely in favor of some common sense controls on products high in Delta 8, Delta 10, and HHC. Let's put them in child proof packaging. Let's require basic potency testing and have labeling requirements.



Cannabinoid hemp is roughly a \$30-billion dollar industry, nationwide. Large out-of-state cannabis companies are lobbying in Maine and all across the country to eliminate our hemp industry, small farmers, and artisanal producers, in favor of corporate-backed cannabis. This is almost always done under the guise of protecting children. This is simply untrue. It is about protecting their bottom lines by eliminating competition.

This is not just about my family's farm, it's about the ripple effect. Hemp is a real industry in Maine with companies owned, run, and staffed by Mainers. We collectively employ hundreds of people. We make meaningful contributions to the economies of the communities in which we operate, and to the state. We make products that help many thousands of people all over the world. And we are using hemp to hopefully return farms shuttered by PFAS contamination to operation. We have trials growing on our farm right now to refine our strategy in preparation for a larger scale remediation grow happening outside this year at our local airport and at a farm shuttered by PFAS. Please don't jeopardize this work.

- A vote for this Bill is a vote for big out-of-state cannabis businesses.
- A vote for this bill is a vote against our environment.
- A vote for this bill is a vote against the health and well being of patients with a myriad of issues from seizures to chronic pain to anxiety.
- A vote for this bill is a vote against Maine farmers.
- A vote for this bill is a vote against the Maine economy; not only here in Augusta and further south, but in Washington county, in Machias, where my farm is located - the single poorest town in the entire state.

Maine has a history of leading the pack with cannabis reform and not giving in to fear mongering and out of state big business pressures. So I ask you: Please vote against this bill. And please, let's not do this again next year. Engage with us. We want to work with you to create common sense regulations that protect all Mainers, that build trust, and that allow this industry to flourish in our state and beyond. Hemp is a great industry for Maine. For its people. For its environment. For its economy.

Thank you,

Benjamin C. Edwards

