



Testimony in Support of LD 2204, “[An Act to Combat Racketeering in Scheduled Drugs by Certain Organizations](#)”

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 2204. My name is Jacob Posik and I serve as the Director of Legislative Affairs at Maine Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to expand individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. I am testifying on behalf of Maine Policy in **support of LD 2204**.

LD 2204 is a response to the illegal Chinese marijuana grows that have taken over rural Maine.¹ Last year, an unclassified memo from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security revealed that roughly 270 illegal marijuana grows worth an estimated \$4.37 billion are operated by Asian Transnational Criminal Organizations throughout Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, Penobscot and Somerset counties.²

Since this information was first exposed to the public and the media began shining a light on these illicit activities in rural Maine, a number of busts have occurred. In early January, a raid at a property in China, Maine turned up 970 plants and three arrests.³ On February 9, a Norridgewock property was busted and law enforcement found more than 2,000 plants and 10 pounds of processed marijuana.⁴ Raids at properties in Whitefield, Jefferson, Chelsea, and other towns have resulted in the seizure of thousands more mature and immature plants, and hundreds of pounds of processed marijuana.

All of this illegal activity has downstream effects that negatively impact Mainers, including those in the market for a home and those who legally grow and purchase recreational marijuana.

Maine Policy takes property rights seriously and always approaches policies associated with the seizing of private property with caution. However, considering these properties were acquired with the intent of illegally growing, selling, and trafficking marijuana, we support the creation of laws that would enable law enforcement to crack down on these operations and seize the properties involved for rehabilitation and resale to the public.

¹ <https://www.themainewire.com/2023/11/triad-weed-illegal-chinese-marijuana-grows-are-all-over-maine/>

² <https://dailycaller.com/2023/08/16/exclusive-illegal-chinese-marijuana-grow-operations-taking-over-blue-state-leaked-memo-says/>

³ <https://www.themainewire.com/2024/01/triad-weed-illegal-marijuana-grow-in-china-maine-busted-970-plants-seized-three-arrested/>

⁴ <https://www.themainewire.com/2024/02/no-arrests-as-illicit-chinese-marijuana-grow-in-norridgewock-busted/>



Similarly, we are skeptical of RICO laws and how they've been used throughout history not to stop mobsters and organized crime, but rather to go after unions, protesters and investment firms.⁵ However, we're comfortable that LD 2204 as written is sufficiently narrow in scope to violations of the laws governing the manufacturing and trafficking of scheduled drugs. This language should give law enforcement in Maine the tools they need to properly prosecute the Asian Transnational Criminal Organizations highlighted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

However, Maine Policy does not support §451 of LD 2204 and cautions the committee against adopting such broad language prohibiting individuals from the named countries from acquiring outright, or interest in, real estate within the state.

Please **support LD 2204** this session to stop the organized and illegal marijuana grows that exist across rural Maine and serve to distort the state's legal marijuana market and limit housing opportunities for current and future Mainers. Thank you.

⁵ <https://www.independent.org/publications/tir/article.asp?id=215>