



To the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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'FOR' LD 421

My name is Mark Barnett. I am a resident of Auburn, a medical marijuana caregiver, and the owner of Higher Grounds, a coffee and hemp shop in Portland. I am also Executive Chairman of the Maine Craft Cannabis Association, a diverse group of independent professionals and activists committed to defending and strengthening an authentic and responsible craft cannabis industry in Maine.

I am writing in support of LD 421, 'An Act To Increase the Number of Plants a Medical Marijuana Caregiver May Cultivate'. Maine's small cultivating caregivers are the lifeblood of our medical program, producing a wide array of high quality flower despite the oppressive limit on cultivation that the dispensary licenses—primarily controlled by large multistate operators Acreage Holdings and Curaleaf—are not subject to. Maine's medical cannabis market is very tight, with growing patient counts and strong demand driving a shortage in 2020 despite growing production from caregivers, driving prices higher and leaving shelves near to empty of flower for months. Medical cannabis tourism has put further pressure on prices, due to this ill-conceived limitation on caregivers.

The arbitrary 30-plant cap has long privileged the dispensary licensees, which have unlimited cultivation and unlimited funding from their large corporate owners. Despite that, Maine's over 2,500 caregivers massively out-contributed the dispensaries in 2019 and 2020 in sales, job creation, sales tax revenues to the state, and economic impact for Mainers. There is no reason to believe that expanding this cap won't lead to better outcomes for both patients and for our state's economy. We look forward to a robust conversation on this issue, and believe passage of this bill would be a step in the right direction, badly needed for this government as the Executive branch inexplicably seeks to use rulemaking to crush the medical market that Maine's patients access for quality products and where small businesses have so thrived. It's crucial that the Legislature understand Maine's medical patients and small medical cannabis businesses are under direct assault along with the enormous economic engine they provide for this state. Let's re-commit to Maine patients and to Maine businesses. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Mark Barnett

