

Arleigh Kraus
Warren

In Support of LD 939

An Act to Support Maine's Medical Marijuana Program and Ensure Patient Access

Arleigh A. Kraus
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Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Arleigh Kraus. I am a registered cannabis caregiver, farmer, and business owner in Warren. I am a founding member of the Maine Craft Cannabis Association, I am a member of Seed2Health Learning Health Alliance, and I am the Chair of the Adult and Medical Marijuana Committee for the Town of Warren. I have been a caregiver in Maine for over 10 years. I have been able to support my family, grow my farm, and meet and care for some lovely people who seek me out for the plant medicine I provide. The crippling rules of the Office of Marijuana Policy are not hurting some far away unknowable corporation; they are hurting me and about 3,000 others like me right here in Maine.

Today I am testifying in support of LD 939 An Act to Support Maine's Medical Marijuana Program and Ensure Patient Access. Maine's Medical Marijuana Program began in 1999 and was approved by the people of Maine as a program by which Maine citizens could take control of their own health needs with use of medical marijuana. We are now in the year 2021. The medical marijuana program created here in Maine is a whopping 22 years old. In the past two plus decades Maine medical marijuana caregivers have progressed from basement grow rooms to beautiful state of the art cultivation farms rivaling commercial indoor and greenhouse vegetable production farms found across the globe. We use much of the same technology and resources that commercial vegetable farmers do as well, from water and soil to energy. We are constrained in a far tighter manner than any other industry. We cannot bank legally, we are prohibited from earned income credit on our taxes, we are still looked upon as if we are criminals from many state departments here in Maine. Meanwhile, the push for federal regulation by lobbyists for tobacco, alcohol, security, substance abuse and banking corporations is on the horizon. That regulatory push is going to "legitimize" the cannabis market for the billion dollar corporations and help them take over this state's homegrown 260 million dollar industry along with others across the nation while taking away jobs, access to marijuana medicine, and possibly homes of the people who use and produce this plant for medicine here and now.

How is overregulation of the medical marijuana program being justified? The data from the Office of Marijuana Policy on any statistics pointing to high crime, youth abuse, break-ins for businesses, diversion, etc is non-existent. The only clear diversion I can find is the money that the state is paying to Cannabis Public Policy consultants and Advocates for Human Potential to write and advise policy to regulate this market. Both of these consulting groups are tied to tobacco, alcohol and other billion dollar corporations waiting to pounce on this market. I ask for the data to be presented on where exactly the need for such restrictions is originating from. Based on national statistics Maine is the lowest crime state in the nation. Why are regulations being imposed which have no relevance to the demographics of this state. Surely what policy works in New York City or Los Angeles California is not the same as what we want or need in Maine. Look around and ask yourself who you know who uses medical cannabis, an uncle, a grandmother, a neighbor. Considering that eight percent of the population of Maine uses medical cannabis I am certain that this plant medicine touches almost everyone in this state by at the most a degree or two of separation.

LD 939 is asking for:

Patient cards to be acceptable in the digital form (this is already legal for out of state patients).

Legal wholesale transactions of 100 percent of all harvested marijuana. Currently medical marijuana caregivers are limited to wholesale of 75 percent or less of their harvested marijuana. The rationale for this restriction is to protect patient access to marijuana medicine. Caregivers should be provided the choice as to how they sell their product, especially when one looks at rural areas.

Family members over 18 years of age to be eligible to be an assistant for a medical marijuana caregiver. This is common sense and practical. We are talking about farming here- Considering approximately 61 percent of the state is rural and 40 percent of the state's population resides in and around Portland the ability in particular for rural family members to participate not only in learning a trade but in the economics of supporting their family should be supported.

Allow for registration identification cards and criminal history checks to be valid for one year. Firstly, five years is the standard length of time for criminal history checks to last for teachers, coaches and substitute teachers regardless of employment. For banking the standard is 7 years. How can an annual background check be justified with a straight face for medical marijuana and for this check to be re-done every time a person gets a new job in the industry.

To change the fees associated with the dimensions of growing space to be equivalent to fees for the number of plants cultivated. It's an unnecessary extra cost burden to still pay per plant if you select to grow by square footage.

Allow for advertising as any other business would be allowed to do. We are not talking about anything other than online based or traditional advertising for our business. The current law would prohibit all advertising unless it is through an application downloaded to a phone or computer specifically for the business who is advertising and within your location. How is any business expected to compete and grow if we cannot be seen? Building an application specifically for one's business just to be able to provide a service to patients costs thousands of dollars and in what other industry is this found?

To change the period of time all medical marijuana cultivators, testing facilities and manufacturing facilities must keep records from 7 years to 2 years. Where is the basis for this coming from? The standard for agriculture and food production farms is two years per the FDA.

Remove the requirement of an annual audit by a third party. According to Forbes magazine the minimal cost of an annual audit is \$10,000. This number gets significantly larger with more employees and business types. What rationale is there for an annual audit? We are not banking, trading stocks, or managing life fortunes.

We the working class of farmers, patients, scientists, and others have built this industry up to a success story of national renown. Let our state be a leader with the medical cannabis program as we have been for two decades and do not stop the progress or quality in service and care we have come to be known for.

Respectfully,
Arleigh A. Kraus