



To The Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
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LD 1434: NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

My name is Mark Barnett. I am a resident of Auburn, Maine and own a medical cannabis retail store in Portland, Maine called Higher Grounds. I'm the Executive Chair of the Maine Craft Cannabis Association, a group of independent cannabis-related business owners, farmers, entrepreneurs and enthusiasts focused on crafting sound cannabis policy and fostering an authentic craft cannabis industry in the state of Maine. We recommend that this Committee **AMEND** LD 1434 – 'An Act Regarding Controlled Entry Areas within Retail Marijuana Stores' with this language change:

Sec. 1. 28-B MRSA §504, sub-§9 is enacted to read:

9. Controlled indoor entry area. A marijuana store may have an indoor entry area directly inside the marijuana store in which the identification of a purchaser may be verified, and a purchaser may await entry into the sales area of the marijuana store. A controlled, indoor entry area under this subsection must:

A. Be physically separated from the sales area of the marijuana store;

B. Prevent a purchaser in the controlled, indoor entry area from viewing adult use marijuana or adult use marijuana product displayed for sale in the marijuana store; and

C. Have a means to prevent entry of a purchaser from the controlled, indoor entry area into the sales area except as permitted by an employee of a marijuana store who is present in the controlled, indoor entry area.

It was we think clearly an oversight in drafting that led to Adult Use stores *not* being able to check IDs inside their premises. This oversight should be fixed. **However, we completely oppose the imposition of the mandatory qualifications attached in LD 1434.** These are a combination of lurking safety hazards and weapons of a worldview that treats cannabis as a dangerous, scary product. To the first:

- Many retail spaces have limited means of ingress and egress. This bill as written would create major life safety hazards in the event of fire or any need to exit a premise. Creating another barrier slowing persons inside from exiting the store makes no sense from a safety perspective.



- Creating a 'may not view cannabis' standard means that anything in the 'may not view' area **can't be viewed by other staff**. This raises both serious security issues in the event of an incident in this area and operational issues with crowd management and customer interaction.

To the second: is there some kind of secret rash of cannabis robberies and child overdose crises we're basing this on? Are not the other extreme security measures required of cannabis retail stores not sufficient to demonstrate how afraid we are supposed to be of this legal plant and protect children from consuming cannabis?

Just as importantly as the operational issue this bill seeks to fix, this bill also reinforces a thoroughly discredited and harmful worldview regarding cannabis, cannabis products, and cannabis businesses as being dangerous health and criminal threats to the public. Remember where that worldview came from? The utterly failed War on Drugs with its roots in racism, classism, predatory policing, and corporate profits for cannabis alternatives and systems of incarceration, that's where. From the outright propaganda war that has kept cannabis a schedule 1 substance federally despite its complete mismatch with the requirements for such scheduled substances. What in the world would all those pharmaceutical companies and consumer packaged goods corporations be chasing and trying to develop products from if this were such a dangerous plant? Where is the health or safety data to back this 'strategy' of drug use education up?

Why in the world would we be afraid of a person under the age of 21 physically seeing cannabis products? Children and teenagers of all ages walk down aisles filled with liquor, beer, wine, powerful over-the-counter chemicals, and more every day and don't rush home to overdose on those. Why again would we treat cannabis, a plant that is thoroughly therapeutic in nature even if it can also carry an enjoyable 'high', as more dangerous than these potentially lethal substances that actually kill people every year? Cannabis has never killed anyone, and while any substance or mix of substances when abused can be harmful to a person (can we talk about opioids? Refined sugar?) cannabis has one of the most low-risk safety profiles of any of them.

Please, dispatch with the manufactured outrage and fearmongering around this plant. There is no practical or societal justification for this bill as written. Please strike the above sections and address the oversight in LD 1719 without **further** propagating a radical and reactionary propaganda born from racism, unjust policing, and corporate corruption in Maine statute.

Sincerely,

Mark Barnett