

Michelle Campbell
North Haven

To the committee members of the VLA,

My name is Michelle Campbell. I am 52 years old, have 5 children, and live on North Haven Island. I was born in Rockland, Maine, and have been a citizen of Maine my entire life. I am grateful for every day that I am blessed to enjoy my time on Earth.

After my diagnosis of Metastatic Breast Cancer in 2017, I felt fortunate to be able to add to the list of things that I am grateful for—my childhood friend, Missy Parkerton, is a licensed Caregiver in the Maine Medical Marijuana Program (MMMP), and happens to live on North Haven too! We have since both become volunteers in the Seed2Health Learning Health Alliance, along with many other amazing people.

A year into traditional treatments, my son mentioned FECO oil—a full extract cannabis oil, as a possible alternative to the chemotherapy which was making me sick. I called my Caregiver friend and asked her if she had heard of FECO oil. She suggested I get my Medical Card, which I did, then we started researching together. We have been on an amazing journey: gathering information from other Caregivers, working to find the right dosing protocols for me and my needs and, after acquiring my Caregiver Assistant card, spending time together working with the plants that provide my medicine today.

I have checked out a few Recreational shops to see what they are like and find them sterile and impersonal; Though they seem to know their product, they do not know, nor do they care, how to help a patient like me who is in need of support and guidance while exploring the therapeutic benefits of this plant. The personal attention that I get from my Caregiver is just as much medicine to me as the cannabis plant itself is. She takes the time to understand my unique health concerns and needs, and is even willing to engage with my medical team. I simply cannot get this level of care in the Adult Use marketplace.

My Oncologist's statement, "You have stage 4 cancer" was the absolute scariest and most devastating thing I have ever heard. The therapeutic value of cannabis has given me hope that I did not have before, and to me this is magic. Maine's Medical Marijuana Program is a vital part of what I consider whole-hemylth healing journey and I, along with so many others, need it to thrive.

I believe that the symbiotic relationship that my Caregiver, the plant, and myself have created is at risk if the proposed rules go through as is. Please do not allow changes that could severely limit the MMMP program. The financial burdens would be beyond what my Caregiver could afford and would cripple her ability to provide products at reduced rates for patients like myself who are unable to work because of the effects our health diagnoses have on our bodies. Unlike pharmaceutical medications, this choice of treatment is not covered under insurance and we must pay out-of-pocket. I believe most small remote towns in Maine, not just the islands, have similar Caregiver/patient relationships that help make obtaining medicine safe, affordable, and uncomplicated.

Please find ways to understand what makes the MMMP program so different from the Adult Use Program. Please take a closer look at the existing system, developed and maintained successfully for 20 years by Maine citizens. There is a reason that it has been labeled as the best Medical Marijuana Program in this country. Please slow the rule making process down and ask OMP to consider feedback from caregivers, patients, and healthcare providers in the development of the new rules so this program can be preserved as the successful one that it is already.

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