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***Testimony of Sen. Eloise Vitelli supporting  
LD 1242, An Act To Ensure Appropriate Oversight of Maine's Medical Marijuana Program  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs  
April 23, 2021***

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Eloise Vitelli, and I represent Senate District 23, which includes all of Sagadahoc County and the Town of Dresden in Lincoln County. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1242, “An Act To Ensure Appropriate Oversight of Maine's Medical Marijuana Program.”

There are roughly 3,000 registered caregivers in Maine, and many of them reside in my district. Over the past several months, a number of these small, independent business owners and medical providers have shared their concerns over recent medical marijuana rule changes with me.

These small providers are worried about their ability to comply with these new mandates and still stay in business. By requiring caregivers to make costly changes to their facilities and the way they operate, we risk shutting down hundreds – even thousands – of small businesses across the state. If big businesses are the only ones who can afford to abide by the rules, then big business and large, out-of-state operators are all we’ll be left with.

OMP’s data show that 4,791 people are currently employed by or assist Maine’s 3,084 licensed caregivers. These are real jobs across our state, including some in our most rural or economically depressed areas. Every small business operates in a community and gives back to that community in numerous ways. Small businesses keep our money and tax dollars local, drive innovation and growth, employ our friends, family and neighbors, and sponsor local groups and events. Big businesses are not able, or motivated, to contribute in the same way.

In the case of medical marijuana, keeping providers local also helps to foster a closer relationship between patient and provider. This is the kind of medical care all of us are looking for when we select a doctor or a pharmacy. Again, the close personal relationship these caregivers currently offer simply can’t be matched by the big businesses that will take over if small caregivers are forced to shut down.

I spent my career helping build small businesses, and I have long argued that one size does not fit all in the world of small business regulation. The size and scale of regulations needs to be commensurate with the size and scale of the businesses they regulate. LD 1242 would give Maine caregivers and their patients a voice in crafting the rules that govern their industry, to ensure that these rules don’t unduly favor some providers over others. By passing LD 1242, the Legislature can help make sure that Maine’s growing medical marijuana trade has the most positive possible impact for Maine and its people.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of this legislation.

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