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April 23, 2021

Testimony In Support of LD 1242, An Act To Ensure Appropriate Oversight of Maine's Medical Marijuana Program

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Charlotte Warren and I represent House District 84 which includes the city of Hallowell, and the towns of Manchester and West Gardiner. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **LD 1242, An Act To Ensure Appropriate Oversight of Maine's Medical Marijuana Program.**

My support for this particularly important piece of legislation aligns with the testimony of others you will hear from today: that Maine's medical marijuana program is quite well without the Office of Marijuana Policy's proposed overhaul. Additionally, I share the concerns that OMP has crafted major substantive rules that treat these business owners, this large business sector made up of Maine's caregivers, so drastically different than others.

As lawmakers, we spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to attract and keep revenue producing industry in Maine. When large business owners visit legislative committees, we roll out the red carpet, hosting friendly and energetic conversations focused on how we can balance the interests of our state whilst stoking the voracity of their economic engines. This is important – we need them and their revenue. Why then is this large revenue generating industry, the business owners, being treated so different?

Unfortunately, the only answer I can come up with is bias. And it is a bias that we all – every single one of us – came by rightly. The bias is borne of the propaganda that fuels the failed drug war in our country. Unfortunately, the Office of Marijuana Policy seems to view medical marijuana caregivers through the same lens as the architects of the drug war; caregivers as criminals who need to be heavily monitored, inspected, fined, and enforced. In fact, do a search of the 80-page proposed rule document for “enforce” and you will find it 52 times. 52 times in 80 pages.

As a seven-year veteran of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I know a bit about enforcement. I also know a fair amount about law enforcement officers and warrants and protecting Mainers constitutionally afforded rights. There is a delicate balance to be achieved between maintaining public safety and protecting our constituents' liberty. But let's get back to the proposed rules and their focus on enforcement. Here are some examples:

"Each registrant shall ensure entry points to any registered premises are designed to control access to only individuals permitted by this Rule or the Act, including without limitation: (4) Law enforcement officers."

"law enforcement officers and employees or agents of local or state agencies with regulatory authority shall provide proof of identification but shall not be considered visitors and shall not be denied entry to any area of the registered premises."

"Each home-based registered caregiver shall meet the following basic security requirements: ... Video surveillance... All videos are subject to inspection by any Department employee or law enforcement officer and must be copied and provided to the Department or law enforcement officer upon request."

Committee members, I ask that you think of these concerns as you work LD 1242. Together, last session we – this committee along with the Criminal Justice and Public committee -- successfully beat back a proposal regarding the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency for cannabis enforcement. Let's continue the trend of moving Maine's Marijuana industry away from the failed war on drugs and treat the cannabis practitioners with the respect that they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.