

Jordan Smith
Pownal
LD 584

Greetings, my name is Jordan Smith. I would like to thank the entire VLA subcommittee for taking the time to read my thoughts on this LD 584, which I strongly support. I have worked for 15 years lobbying for an inclusive, fair and sustainable medical program. I have also been involved in some AU legislation though the medical program is certainly close to my heart as I myself am a patient and caregiver and have watched this program evolve from its inception.

In the beginning the med program was about compassion for people who truly needed help. Since AU it's been based more on financial profits. The rules that the state paid to have written by Freedman and Koski had the decimation of the medical program built in by design.

The apparent conflicts of interest involving DAFS, OCP, John Hudak, METRC and freedman and Koski are a glaring example of why we need another layer of scrutiny when hiring for the position of the Director of OCP. I was saddened to see Governor Mills oppose this bill. It was also disappointing to see her support the attack on the medical program by parroting the dangerous rhetoric from OCP. Her claim that LD 40 resolved all issues we had with OCP and she expected no further legislation in regards to OCP conduct. Neither was ever stated nor implied in LD 40.

I also think that DAFS is behind the curtain on more of this than most would think. The failure to deliver the annual report as well as refusing to answer questions about METRC in regards to a 400k budget item for a "data center". This could imply they are just going to sign a 3rd contract with METRC despite the OPEGA investigation. I would at this time like to remind everyone of the hearing last year where the director of DAFS ironically accused those of us who worked on LD 40 of regulatory capture. Not only is the State already a victim of regulatory capture, they paid Freedman and Koski hundreds of thousands of dollars for it.

The people and lawmakers of maine need to have a say in who is taking on these leadership roles. It is a travesty what has happened to so many Maine residents because of reckless interpretations and actions by OCP. Those who harm Mainers and serve corporate interests are not welcome here.

We need meaningful and effective communication with OCP to ensure the stability, safety and security the operators in both the medical and the AU program as well as the patients and the AU consumers. The confrontational nature of OCPs approach with those they regulate is not sustainable and it diminishes stakeholders ability to service their patients and consumers and causes mistrust of our government and legal process by our citizens. This ongoing standoff needs to end. The will of the people has been communicated through legislation again and again yet OCP still fails to acknowledge or enforce these laws as we have written them. Their modus operandi is seemingly to interpret everything in such a way that it causes the most harm possible to the smaller operators in the cannabis community. Many speak of retaliatory action from OCP if they speak out. Their policing of the cann*bis programs has become a risk to public safety and made targets of program participants. We cannot repeat what has happened as a result of appointing Mr. Hudak to this position. Maine's small operators are the heartbeat of both programs and should be celebrated, not discarded.

In summation I strongly believe that further vetting by the legislature of any potential Director of OCP is a common sense approach to preventing the catastrophic consequences we are experiencing now from happening in the future.

Thank you for your time, I appreciate all of you for your service to the people of the great state of Maine.

Sincerely,
Jordan A Smith