

To: Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Subject: LD 1847 and LD 104

Date: 05-05-25

My name is Lisa Belanger and I live in North Yarmouth. I'm testifying in favor of LD 1847 and LD 104, which would require testing and tracking in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program and prioritize efforts to reduce youth cannabis use.

As a retired family nurse practitioner and psychiatric nurse practitioner, the vast majority of my career has been spent working with adolescents and young adults. I am well aware of the risks involved for young people who use cannabis either recreationally or to treat a health/mental health problem. Research shows that using higher potency cannabis can increase the risk of experiencing adverse impacts, including mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia. That's especially true for adolescents and young adults whose brains are still developing. I have been a first-hand witness to this problem. Unfortunately, unlike the Adult Use Cannabis Program, there's no cap on the THC content of edibles in the Medical Cannabis Program, which increases the risk of accidental overconsumption with its associated side effects, health risks and unintended consequences.

It is also my professional opinion that Maine's Medical Cannabis Program lags far behind the national standard on safety and transparency. Out of more than 30 of states with medical cannabis programs, why is it that Maine is the only one that does not require testing for contaminants like heavy metals, pesticides, or mold? According to the 2023 Maine Office of Cannabis Policy's Report - Harmful Contaminants in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program, 42% of medical cannabis tested had at least one contaminant that would have failed testing in the Adult Use Cannabis Program. This lack of oversight is not only unfair, but also irresponsible and unsafe for the thousands of individuals who choose to use medical cannabis, including pediatric patients and young adults. All those who choose to use this substance for medical reasons deserve to know that the products they're using are free from contaminants that could harm their health.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you vote in support of both LD 1847 and LD 104 to help ensure transparency and safety in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program. It's long overdue. Thank you.