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My name is Sam Tracy and I worked in state cannabis policy for over 10 years. My work covered dozens of states and included a range of roles such as working within cannabis companies, leading legalization campaigns, and advising businesses and governments. Most recently, I served as the "Cannabis Policy Expert" on Maine's Cannabis Hospitality Task Force.

I strongly support efforts to allow cannabis hospitality establishments, as did a large majority of the Cannabis Hospitality Task Force. The status quo, where adults can consume alcohol both at home and in bars & restaurants, but where they can only consume cannabis at home, is unfair and unreasonable. This directly harms renters, whose landlords can prohibit cannabis consumption in their homes, and tourists staying in hotels, which also often prohibit cannabis. This drives consumption into public spaces like parks, as well as into moving vehicles - it's far too often that I smell cannabis smoke coming out of cars while driving or walking around Portland. We need to provide safe, designated places where adults can consume cannabis together, just like we do for alcohol.

However, I do have a recommendation for how to improve this bill, which is currently solely focused on allowing municipalities to license and approve cannabis hospitality lounges. While I think local control is important, this is best done with state licensing that requires municipal opt-in, which we currently do with adult-use cannabis establishments. Municipalities do not have the resources or the expertise to properly license and regulate a new class of cannabis businesses, but the Office of Cannabis Policy does - as recommended by the Task Force, the OCP should be directed to license and regulate cannabis hospitality establishments, which municipalities could then opt-in to allow. This would create a much more safe, reliable system than a patchwork of municipal licensing and regulation.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to learn more about the Cannabis Hospitality Task Force's recommendations or if you have any questions.