

Hi Folks,

Big week is coming up.

Sharing a couple of resources/actions to take in anticipation of next week's cannabis bill hearings. We still don't have the official date, but our cannabis testing bills (LD 104 and LD 1847) will be heard in VLA either Monday May 5th or Thursday May 8th.

1. Sign on letter: Please add your names individually (not a group sign on, for ex, add as Matt Wellington, Maine Public Health Association) to this [letter via the google form](#). We'll share the letter and signers list with legislators on the day of the hearing (either Monday or Thursday). Please also share it far and wide with your networks. I'd like a robust list of signers that cuts across educators, health professionals and more.

2. Draft testimony: You can use the attached testimony toolkit to draft your testimony. It includes messaging guidance, facts, and two sample versions of testimony (one focused on consumer safety and one focused on youth use).

More to come soon!

Best,

Matt

--

Matt Wellington (he/him)

Associate Director

Maine Public Health Association

Podcast: [Healthy Maine Talks](#)

Medical Cannabis Testing - Testimony Toolkit

Contents:

- ***Bill Summaries***
- ***Background Facts***
- ***Messaging Guidance and Key Talking Points***
- ***Sample Testimony***
- ***Submission Information***

Bill Summaries

Two bills are up for consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs next week.

- **LD 104** – “An Act to Protect the Health of Medical Cannabis Patients and Streamline the Mandatory Testing of Cannabis,” sponsored by Rep. Marc Malon, would require mandatory testing in the Medical Cannabis Program for potentially harmful contaminants like pesticides, heavy metals, and mold. It also makes minor changes to the Adult Use Cannabis Program testing model.
- **LD 1847** – “An Act to Institute Testing and Tracking of Medical Use Cannabis and Cannabis Products Similar to Adult Use Cannabis and Cannabis Products, Dedicate a Portion of the Adult Use Cannabis Sales and Excise Tax to Medical Use Cannabis Programs and Create a Study Group,” sponsored by Rep. Anne Graham would:
 - Align Maine’s Medical Cannabis Program with the current testing, tracking, and tracing requirements in the Adult Use Cannabis Program, mandating testing for contaminants like pesticides, heavy metals, and mold.
 - Establish a potency cap on the maximum THC content in edible products in the Medical Cannabis Program, similar to what’s already in place for the Adult Use Program.
 - Form a study group to examine youth cannabis use and evidence-based ways to prevent and reduce high-risk use.
 - Divert a portion of the current Adult Use cannabis taxes toward public health and safety awareness and education.
 - Require that edible gummies sold in the Adult Use Program that aren't stamped or embossed with the Universal Symbol be sold in blister packaging to reduce accidental ingestion.

****Please testify in favor of both bills. You can submit the same testimony for both bills - see below.***

Background Facts:

Youth cannabis use/health impacts

- Today's cannabis products can contain levels of THC as high as 90%, compared to the two to three percent THC concentrations typical of cannabis in the 1970s (Harvard Public Health Magazine, 2024).
- Nearly 1 in 5 Maine high schoolers currently use cannabis (MIYHS 2023).
- Cannabis use can alter a young person's brain development, and increase the risk of anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses like schizophrenia (US CDC 2024).
- Youth who regularly use cannabis are more likely to attempt suicide compared to their peers who don't regularly use cannabis (Flores et al., 2023)
- Pediatricians and psychiatrists across the country warn that they're seeing an increase in people experiencing mental illness that may be associated with cannabis use (*The New York Times*, As America's Marijuana Use Grows, So Do The Harms).

Lack of testing and its implications

- Out of more than 30 states with medical cannabis programs, Maine is the only one that does not require testing.
- In Maine, there are 110,500 people that access cannabis through the Medical Program, including pediatric patients (OCP, 2024 Annual Report).
- Unlike the Adult Use Cannabis Program, medical cannabis is not required to be tested for harmful contaminants like heavy metals, pesticides, and 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.
- There is no potency limit on edible products in the Medical Cannabis Program like there is for the Adult Use Program. Higher potency cannabis can increase the risk of adverse reactions, especially among adolescents because their brains are still developing.

Messaging Guidance/Key Talking Points

- Preferred frames are consumer safety and youth mental health.
- High potency cannabis use is harming kids' mental health and derailing their academic futures and social lives.
- High school students that are 18 years old are able to access the Medical Cannabis Program without parent permission.
- Testing cannabis products in the Medical Program is necessary to reassure patients that the product they are consuming is contaminate-free and has accurate potency.
- Medical cannabis patients deserve to have confidence that the products they're consuming won't contain harmful substances like pesticides, heavy metals, and toxic mold.
- Testing for quality control and safety is just good business practice in any industry, but especially so for products being marketed as medicinal.

Sample testimony (consumer safety message)

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

My name is _____ and I live in _____. **If appropriate, use the intro to establish your credibility on the issue (For example, I'm a harm reduction specialist who focuses on reducing high risk substance use).**

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.

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, 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 unfair to the thousands of people who use medical cannabis, including pediatric patients. They deserve to have confidence that the products they're using to manage medical conditions are free from contaminants that could harm their health.

Research shows that using higher potency cannabis can increase the risk of experiencing adverse impacts, including mental illnesses like depression and schizophrenia. That's especially true for adolescents whose brains are still developing. Yet unlike in 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, in terms of potency, and associated side effects.

I respectfully request you to vote LD 1847 and LD 104 "Ought to Pass" to help ensure transparency and safety in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program. It's long overdue. Thank you.

Sample Testimony (youth use focus)

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

My name is _____ and I live in _____. If appropriate, use the intro to establish your credibility on the issue (For example, I've been a teacher for X years in the Maine school system).

I'm testifying in favor of LD 1847 and LD 104, which would prioritize efforts to reduce unsafe youth cannabis use and require testing and tracking in Maine's Medical Cannabis Program.

Nearly 1 in 5 Maine high schoolers currently use cannabis. That's especially concerning given that today's cannabis products can contain levels of THC as high as 90%, compared to the two to three percent THC concentrations typical of cannabis in the 1970s. If you have personal experience you want to share, here is a good place to add it.]

Higher potency cannabis can alter adolescent brain development, and increase their risk of anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses like schizophrenia (US CDC 2024). Indeed, pediatricians and psychiatrists in Maine and across the country warn that they're seeing an increase in people experiencing mental illness that may be associated with cannabis use. (*The New York Times*, As America's Marijuana Use Grows, So Do The Harms). Yet more than 60% of Maine high schoolers believe there is little to no risk of using cannabis once or twice a week (2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey Data).

We need policies that prioritize reducing high-risk youth cannabis use so that our kids can thrive.

LD 1847 would help reduce high-risk youth cannabis use by:

- Establishing a maximum potency of THC in edible products in the Medical Cannabis Program similar to what's already in place in the Adult Use Program.
- Forming a study group to examine youth cannabis use and evidence-based ways to prevent and reduce high-risk use.
- Diverting a portion of the current Adult Use cannabis taxes toward public health and safety awareness and education.
- Requiring that edible gummies sold in the Adult Use Program that aren't stamped or embossed with the Universal Symbol be sold in blister packaging to reduce the risk of accidental ingestion.

I respectfully request you to vote LD 1847 and LD 104 "Ought to Pass" to help ensure transparency and safety in Maine's cannabis industry. These bills make much needed changes to the Medical and Adult Use Cannabis Programs. They are long overdue. Thank you.

Testimony Tips and Submission Guidelines

- *State your position up front and clearly. For this hearing, you can say you're testifying in support of both LD 1847 and LD 104.*
- *Oral testimony is a place where you can emphasize your personal connection and win hearts and minds. Written testimony is where you include more detail and research to support your position.*
- *If you're giving oral testimony, practice saying it beforehand. Maintain a slow pace so legislators can fully absorb what you're saying. You have 3 minutes to speak; please don't go over that time limit.*
- *Submit your testimony by midnight on the day before the hearing (Sunday night).*
- *If you are testifying over Zoom, you must sign up at least 30 minutes before the start of the hearing (see instructions below). They call on people in the order in which they registered (usually segmented by position on the bill - proponents, opponents, neither for nor against), so we suggest signing up earlier rather than later.*
- *Testimony received after the day of the public hearing will be published online (and is part of the public record) but is less likely to be read by committee members - so it's important to get it in before the hearing.*
- *Testimony will be publicly available online as soon as possible after the day of the hearing.*
- *Your name and the town in which you live (or the organization you represent), as specified by you on the form, will accompany the publishing of your testimony.*
- *Please include your name and town of residence (or organization) on any documents.*
- *Please note that submitted testimony is part of the public record, and you are unable to change what you've submitted, so please check for typos, etc., and please be sure to remove any track changes or comments in the document that may be left over from team editing.*
- *If a committee member asks you a question you don't know the answer to (or don't want to commit to on the microphone), it is totally fine to say that you will get back to them. It's better to say that, than to give the wrong information/misspeak.*

To submit electronic testimony:

1. Go to [Testimony page](#)
2. Select “Public Hearing” under “Type of Hearing”
3. Select applicable committee under dropdown (**Veterans and Legal Affairs**)
4. Select date and time (**Monday, May 5 at 11:00am :**
5. Choose applicable bill(s) (**LD 1847 and LD 104**). You will need to upload your testimony for each bill separately, even if it’s the same document for both bills.
6. If testifying over Zoom, check the box for testifying over Zoom (If you’re only submitting written testimony, DO NOT check that box.).
 - ★ Once page automatically reloads, select, "I am for the proposed legislation" under text asking for position on the legislation.
 - ★ ***Note for virtual testifiers:*** To testify electronically over Zoom, register at least 30 mins before the start time of the hearing. See step by step instructions below and a [video walk through here](#).
7. Adding written testimony
 - ★ Upload testimony file by clicking on the "Choose File" button, then selecting the applicable file saved on your computer. ***Please double-check that you have the correct file. Everything uploaded is permanently part of the public record.***
 - ★ OR copy and paste the testimony text into the space provided.
8. Add your information
 - a. Name
 - b. City/town of residence OR organization you represent
 - c. Email address
 - d. Phone number (only if testifying over Zoom)
9. Complete reCAPTCHA.
10. Hit Submit/Register to submit your testimony and/or register to testify over Zoom. If you’re testifying virtually, you will receive a confirmation email shortly after you submit, which will have the Zoom link.
11. Congratulations, you’ve submitted testimony and/or registered to testify virtually for the Maine legislature!