



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Stephen Stanley

In Support of **LD 1380, An Act To Legalize, Tax and Regulate Marijuana**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Rosen, Representative Fowle and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Stephen Stanley and I represent the good people of House District 143 which includes East Millinocket, Medway, Millinocket and Patten, plus part of the unorganized territory of North Penobscot.

As you know, my region of the state has been devastated by the mill closure, and we are doing a lot of soul searching right now on how to build a new economy without the paper mill. I've been at this awhile, and I've come to realize that the most important thing we can do in the Legislature is to set policies that help create jobs. It's why I so strongly support **LD 1380, An Act To Legalize, Tax and Regulate Marijuana**.

I worked in the paper mill for years and we always knew who smoked, who didn't and it was never a big deal. We didn't treat them any differently because it was just like having a beer. I could probably walk outside this door and run into three people who I could buy marijuana from, and the same is certainly true in rural Maine where I live. It's been a part of Maine life for as long as I've been alive, and it will likely continue to be part of life.

It's never made much sense to me that I could have a beer, but my friends couldn't smoke a joint. I've been a county commissioner and we've spent a lot of time talking about the jail problems. We never have enough space or enough money to house people. You're right in the heart of that debate here in this committee. So how does it make sense to be arresting people for using something that can be found just about everywhere in the state already?

We have to build a sustainable economy for our future. Wasting resources on Prohibition means we are not putting that money into initiatives that create jobs. We already know there's a cottage industry in Maine. Why shouldn't we bring that out of the black market, into the light and start capturing tax revenue on it. It's not just the sales tax that we'd collect; it's also income taxes and payroll taxes.

Let's face it, Maine is almost always on the tail end of innovation and economic growth. We're the last people to jump at an opportunity. It's like showing up at Thanksgiving after the turkey's already been served. How do you get the best leg if someone else is already chomping down on it? Maine has an opportunity to attract scientists who research and study botany. If we get in early, we can create a cluster effect that will attract the best and the brightest minds. It's not just about cultivation and retail sales. There are a lot of ancillary support services to the industry.

Whether it's a co-packing company, a chef making infused olive oils for the restaurant industry, or the added boost in tourism, Maine will only get to enjoy it if we show up to the dinner table early enough to get in on the feast. These jobs are not likely going to be centered in Portland, either. For once, these jobs are prime for rural regions of the state.

My people can't wait for some big silver bullet to save the day. This is already a flourishing industry, and Maine has shown that it can regulate it reasonably. Let's allow adults to make their own decisions while also giving rural Maine a chance to compete for good paying jobs right in their region. This isn't a silver bullet, but if my people can manufacture paper, I'm sure they can manufacture byproducts from marijuana.

I'm tired of coming to Augusta, hat in hand, to beg for help for my region. Opening an adult use market could help my region stand on its own two feet for the first time in ages, and bring not just hope back to my people, but pride.
Let's get Maine back to work.