

Thursday, April 23, 2025

Written Testimony of Rob Bovett
before the
Senate Judiciary Committee
in favor of
A-Engrossed Senate Bill 162

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Kim Wallan, and
Representatives Andersen, Chaichi, Lewis, Mannix, and Tran

For the record I'm Rob Bovett. I have been involved in drug policy at local, state, national, and international levels for a few decades, and teach Drug Law and Policy and Cannabis Law and Policy at Lewis & Clark Law School. My career has focused heavily on creating and implementing diversionary programs in our criminal justice system for people suffering from addiction or behavioral health issues.

Senate Bill 162 is the 2025 omnibus cannabis bill. It is designed to contain bi-partisan, bi-cameral, and consensus-driven improvements to Oregon's cannabis laws, which I have long been a part of helping to craft. Each legislative session I offer to bring forward an omnibus bill for these purposes, working with a multitude of key stakeholders. Senate Bill 162 deserves your support. Here is a brief overview of what is in the bill:

Section 1 authorizes the destruction of hoop houses when executing a search warrant to investigate the unlawful production of marijuana. As I am sure you are aware, Oregon has recently experienced a significant influx of illicit drug cartel cannabis grows that continue to plague many parts of our state with environmental damage, water theft, violence and other community harm, as well as tragic labor trafficking. These hoop houses are not full-fledged greenhouses with structures and venting, but rather are makeshift plastic coverings over makeshift frames that trap in hazardous chemicals used in these kinds of illegal grows and pose serious risks to law enforcement officers that have to take them down. The Oregon State Sheriffs Association (OSSA) and Oregon Association Chiefs of Police (OACP), as well as the Oregon District Attorneys Association (ODAA), have filed excellent testimony explaining why this section is critical to protecting the health and safety of our law enforcement officers, some of whom have been hospitalized as the result of these exposures.

Sections 2 to 3, 5 to 8, and 10 to 11 clarify that the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC) may issue multi-year licenses for cannabis business. OLCC has this authority for liquor businesses, and arguably for cannabis businesses as well. But legislative clarity on this issue is desirable.

Section 4 expands access to the statewide map of lawful cannabis grows to the Water Resources Department (WRD) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Both of those state agencies have also had a larger role to play in addressing the harms caused by the influx of illicit cartel grows described above, and need such access. The Waer League has filed excellent testimony describing why this is desirable and necessary.

Sections 8 to 10 repeal the prohibition on a marijuana retailer locating within 1,000 feet of a building where a public prekindergarten or kindergarten program is provided. This was a well-intentioned amendment included in 2022 Senate Bill 1522, but unlike the 1,000 foot separation requirement other public schools, this has proven unworkable since there is no mechanism to define or map these facilities.

Section 12 allows the State Department of Agriculture (ODA) to inspect biomass and processed industrial hemp stored at the location of a licensed industrial hemp operation. This is needed to enable ODA to conduct their own inspections and investigations in such circumstances, and not have to rely upon assistance from law enforcement or other agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon in support of Senate Bill 162. I am more than happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

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NOTE: All information and comments above are my own. They do not reflect any official position of Lewis & Clark or any client.