

Written Testimony of Sheriff Nathan Sickler

Jackson County Sheriff's Office

In Support of A-Engrossed Senate Bill 162

Before the Senate Judiciary Committee

Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2025 Session

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and members of the Committee:

For the record, I'm Sheriff Nate Sickler and I am testifying today on behalf the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Jackson County, the Oregon State Sheriff's Association, and the Josephine County Sheriff, Dave Daniel. I have been the Sheriff of Jackson County for over eight years and have over 26 years of experience in law enforcement. During my tenure, I have been involved in all aspects of addressing the illegal marijuana industry from enforcement to advising on policy and legislative efforts.

Jackson and Josephine County have been the epicenter for marijuana cultivation in Oregon, encompassing both licensed recreational operations and illegal marijuana grow sites. The presence of these illegal grows poses risks to public health, safety, environmental integrity, and community livability.

A particularly dangerous and common element of these illegal grows is the construction and use of makeshift "hoop houses." These structures are hastily assembled, often unpermitted, and commonly build with PVC piping or 2x4 frames and covered in plastic. They frequently incorporate unsafe electrical wiring, volatile chemicals, and other hazardous materials that endanger first responders, law enforcement personnel, and even those working on these sites.

Senate Bill 162 – A Engrossed, would grant law enforcement the ability to utilize heavy equipment to dismantle and destroy these illegal "hoop houses". This is a critical tool we need to provide an element of safety for our first responders and efficiently address the illegal marijuana problem in Jackson County, Josephine County, and throughout the state.

Currently, our deputies and task force members are required to enter these contaminated structures and manually destroy the plants, often by hand or with small equipment. This process is extremely time-consuming, labor-intensive, and puts our personnel at unnecessary risk due to chemical exposure, exposure to heat, or contact with harmful particulates from the marijuana plants.

Moreover, without the ability to fully remove or destroy these hoop houses, we have seen the same structures and materials repurposed by criminal enterprises, further perpetuating the cycle of illegal cultivation. These structures are intentionally designed to allow for multiple, rapid growth cycles of marijuana plants—directly increasing the profitability and sustainability of illegal operations.

By authorizing the destruction of “hoop houses” as proposed in SB 162, it would allow us to:

- Reduce the health risks to law enforcement and first responders;
- Dismantle illegal operations more efficiently and permanently;
- Prevent re-use of the same structures for future criminal activity;
- And ultimately enhance public safety and environmental stewardship in our communities.

I ask this Committee to support Senate Bill 162 and provide law enforcement with the much-needed tools to effectively address the illegal marijuana industry, to protect those doing the work, and to protect the environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheriff Nathan Sickler

Jackson County Sheriff's Office