Testimony in Opposition of LD 557
An Act To Provide Reasonable Accommodations for School Attendance for Children with Disabilities for Whom Medical Marijuana Has Been Recommended
Submitted by James C. Dziobek III, on behalf of the Maine Public Health Association

To Representative Kornfield, Senator Langley, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Jim Dziobek, a Master of Public Health student at University of New England and policy intern with the Maine Public Health Association. MPHA is an organization that represents over 400 public health professionals across the state who are dedicated to the health and well-being of all Maine residents. We are a science-based association that only weighs in on bills when we have the data or evidence to support our testimony.

I am writing today to provide input into LD 557. LD 557 seeks to allow reasonable accommodations for school-aged patients that are prescribed medical marijuana. Though we agree that medical marijuana may be appropriate for children with specific conditions and under the guidance of a medical professional, we are concerned about this bill for several reasons.

1. Under the current statutes state-level medical marijuana policy does not allow for protection of school personnel from violation of federal law. Under section 6.20 dispensary locations must not be within 500 feet of a pre-existing public or private school.
2. LD 557 creates confusion by allowing medical marijuana on school campuses. Confusion among staff, parents, and students that could lead to distractions from school activities.
3. We are also concerned about the cultural norm shift this bill represents by defying federal drug laws and not encouraging stakeholders to weigh in on what would work best within a school setting.
4. Finally there is concern over children that are prescribed medical marijuana might share their medication with other students, this sharing could lead to an overdose potential and be harmful to health.

MPHA is not against children getting the medication they are prescribed, but we are concerned about the burden that LD 557 puts on local schools and the other risks opening access to medical marijuana at school poses to other students and to society at large. Distinguished members of the Committee, I urge you to send a strong message to the legislature and to the public by providing a unanimous “ought not to pass” committee report on LD 557. Thank you for your time.