

New Maine Ballot Measure Seeks to Undo Cannabis Legalization

New Maine Ballot Initiative Would Roll Back Cannabis Legalization Law Approved By Voters

A Renewed Push to Reverse Voter-Approved Cannabis Legalization in Maine

Nearly a decade after [Maine voters approved adult-use cannabis](#), a new campaign is underway to undo much of that progress. A group led by Republican operatives and former government officials has submitted a citizen initiative that, if approved, would roll back the state's commercial marijuana market and restrict personal cultivation rights.

The initiative represents the latest in a series of political efforts across the U.S. to reverse or restrict voter-approved cannabis laws echoing similar campaigns gaining traction in Massachusetts and other states where legalization has already taken hold.

Republican-Led Petition Seeks to Dismantle Maine's Adult-Use Market

The petition, filed last month with Maine's secretary of state, seeks to repeal the state's current framework for the sale of recreational cannabis. It is backed by state Sen. Scott Cyrway (R), former senior policy advisor Nicholas Adolphsen, and chief petitioner Madison Carey, among others.

If enacted, the initiative would eliminate licensing for recreational dispensaries and cultivation sites, effectively dismantling the state's commercial adult-use market. It would also prohibit adults from growing cannabis plants for personal use—a right granted under Maine's 2016 legalization measure.

However, the initiative stops short of reinstating full prohibition. Adults would still be allowed to possess up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana, and Maine's medical cannabis program would remain untouched.

Petition Still Under Review by State Officials

Before petitioners can begin gathering signatures, the measure must undergo a formal review process by the Maine Secretary of State's Office.

A spokesperson for the office confirmed that the petitioners have requested revisions to the proposed language through the Revisor's Office. Once those adjustments are made, the proposal will need a fiscal impact statement before it can be approved for public circulation.

Only then can organizers begin collecting the minimum 67,682 signatures required to qualify for the 2026 ballot.

Chief petitioner Madison Carey has not publicly commented on the campaign or the changes being requested.

The Initiative Would Shift Recreational Operations to the Medical Market

As drafted, the initiative includes provisions that would allow existing adult-use operators to convert their licenses into medical marijuana licenses. The Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) would be responsible for streamlining the transition process.

Additionally, the initiative permits cannabis products currently sold in recreational stores to be transferred or sold to medical license holders. This could create a hybrid system, merging portions of the adult-use market with the state's longstanding medical program.

However, this restructuring would likely shrink the overall market dramatically—restricting access for adult consumers while concentrating business opportunities among fewer operators.

Advocates Condemn the Measure as a Step Backward

The new campaign has drawn sharp criticism from cannabis advocates and industry leaders.

Rep. David Boyer (R), a key architect of the 2016 legalization measure and former staffer for the Marijuana Policy Project, told *Marijuana Moment* he is “deeply concerned” about the repeal effort.

A Broader Pattern: Similar Rollback Efforts in Massachusetts and Beyond

Maine's repeal push comes amid a broader national trend of renewed resistance to cannabis reform. In neighboring Massachusetts, organizers are advancing a similar initiative aimed at scaling back that state's recreational marijuana laws.

That campaign is reportedly “on track” to collect enough signatures to qualify for the 2026 ballot, signaling growing political momentum among prohibitionist groups.

Across several other states, conservative lawmakers have also proposed measures to restrict cannabis access or tighten licensing rules, despite polling that consistently shows strong public support for legalization.

Legislative Context: A History of Resistance to Cannabis and Psychedelics Reform

Maine's political landscape has long been divided on drug policy. Although voters passed legalization in 2016, implementation was delayed for years due to opposition from then-Gov. Paul LePage (R)—a vocal critic of marijuana reform.

The new repeal campaign notably includes former LePage staffers, underscoring the continuity of prohibitionist sentiment within certain factions of Maine’s Republican leadership.

Beyond cannabis, state legislators have also rejected or diluted other drug policy reforms. Earlier this year, lawmakers voted against a bill to legalize psilocybin for adults, after amending it into a study proposal that ultimately failed to advance.

And while some progress has been made such as a 2024 law allowing individuals to seal records of past marijuana offenses, the state remains cautious about expanding drug policy reform.

The Stakes for Maine’s Cannabis Economy

Since the launch of adult-use sales in 2020, Maine’s cannabis market has been one of the most successful small-state programs in the U.S.. The state generated over \$250 million in recreational cannabis sales in 2024 and supports thousands of jobs across cultivation, processing, and retail sectors.

Industry advocates argue that repealing legalization would devastate this emerging economy. It would shutter licensed businesses, reduce tax revenue, and likely push consumers back toward the illicit market—undoing years of regulatory progress.

The potential repeal also raises concerns about investment stability. Businesses that have spent millions to comply with Maine’s strict licensing and testing requirements could face massive financial losses if the initiative succeeds.

Opponents Say Repeal Effort Undermines Democracy

For cannabis reform advocates, the deeper issue is not just economic—it’s democratic. Voters decisively approved the legalization measure in 2016, and advocates argue that attempts to overturn that decision undermine the will of the people.

National reform organizations have warned that such repeal efforts could set a dangerous precedent. If successful, they could embolden similar campaigns in other states, destabilizing what has so far been one of the fastest-growing industries in the country.

What Happens Next

The Maine initiative remains in procedural limbo while the secretary of state’s office finalizes its review. If petitioners collect enough valid signatures, the measure would likely appear on the November 2026 ballot.

Whether it succeeds will depend on public sentiment—and on how effectively industry leaders and reform advocates mobilize to defend legalization.

For now, Maine’s cannabis businesses continue to operate under the current regulatory system. But the renewed political push to roll back legalization serves as a reminder that even established cannabis markets are not immune to reversal.

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