

Cannabis Hospitality Task Force – Member Bios

Sam Tracy

Bio: Sam Tracy has been involved in cannabis policy reform since 2009, approaching the issue through the lens of civil liberties and criminal justice reform. Sam has played a key role in passing decriminalization, medical, and adult-use cannabis laws in numerous states, as well as informing regulations on technical issues like testing and labeling. Throughout his career he has worked with nonprofits such as Students for Sensible Drug Policy and the Marijuana Policy Project, with businesses including 4Front Ventures and VS Strategies, and with cannabis trade associations in multiple states. He is excited to volunteer his experience in cannabis policy to help craft the best possible hospitality regulations for Maine.

Reason for applying to the task force: I believe that adults should be able to responsibly consume cannabis at well-regulated businesses, just as they already can with alcohol. I'm excited to help Maine learn from other states that already allow on-premises consumption so we can create the best possible system for our state.

David Ferragamo *Private Chef*

Bio: David Ferragamo was born and raised in New England and has a background in fine dining and cannabis. David has worked around restaurants and hospitality his entire life and has been working inside of the cannabis industry for the past 10 years. David is currently working as a Private Chef cooking for clients along the east coast. For the past 10 years, David has been including cannabis as an option for clients, always doing so with an emphasis on safe consumption habits/techniques. David is uniquely familiar with the process of dosing in an event type setting. He has participated in multiple groups to fight for cannabis equality. In this timespan, David has catered for organizations that promote cannabis wealth fair and private clients.

Reason for applying to the task force: I offer a distinct insight into how the public integrates food and cannabis in various contexts. I am eager help create safe methods for consumption.

Pablo R. Barajas *Founder & Owner, Litty Bittys LLC*

Bio: Pablo Barajas is a Lewiston native born and raised. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre Performance from Chicago College of Performing Arts. He also holds a Master of Science in Cannabis Science and Commerce from American International College in Springfield, MA. He is the founder and owner of Litty Bittys LLC, a gourmet edible manufacturing facility located in Auburn, Maine.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied to this task force to have a deeper connection in this diverse cannabis community we have in Maine.

Rose Mahoney

Bio: Rose Mahoney is a Maine native and has worked in a variety of industries and professions that are closely adjacent to what she perceives to be the purpose of the Cannabis Hospitality Task Force. She has always had an interest in travel and has worked extensively in both the hospitality and service industries and then as an advocate and contracts specialist in a union environment. Rose uses cannabis medically and occasionally recreationally, so she has some insight as to the potential of the knitting together of two of Maine's treasures.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied for this task force because I saw it on the OCP website when I was exploring the webpage for a deeper understanding of Maine's cannabis culture. I thought this was a great opportunity for service to my state while learning some important information that may be a building block to the next phase of my professional life.

Steve Rusnack

Owner, Full Bloom Management, LLC and Full Bloom Cannabis, LLC

Bio: Steve Rusnack is a husband and father of three, a USAF Veteran, and has been involved in the medical cannabis industry in Maine for almost a decade and a half. Steve has also been a member of the adult use cannabis industry for over four years now. Steve holds one medical license and four adult use licenses. He is also a member of the Maine Cannabis Union and has recently been nominated to serve as the President of the MCU.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied to the Cannabis Hospitality Task Force to offer suggestions and insight for the safe and effective implementation and operation of these license types.

Christopher Beaumont

Marijuana Compliance Coordinator, City of Portland

Bio: Chris Beaumont currently serves the City of Portland as their Marijuana Compliance Coordinator. Chris served as a liaison for both the Permitting and Inspections Department and the Fire Department during the creation of the current municipal ordinance regulating marijuana businesses in the city. This ordinance regulates both the medical and adult use programs. He is the lead Code Enforcement Officer for all marijuana occupancy inspections. Chris has been serving as a Principal for the development of the recently released draft version of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard covering fire protection and safety for cannabis cultivation and processing.

Reason for applying to the task force: The City of Portland has almost 100 active marijuana licenses. Any new rules or changes to existing rules around social consumption could have potentially widespread impacts on what Portland's or other municipalities' local enforcement programs look like.

Jon Rioux
Code Enforcement Director, Town of Windham

Bio: Jonathan Rioux is the Code Enforcement Director for the Town of Windham. In this role, Jon oversees the code enforcement department providing for the general administration and enforcement of municipal building, land use codes, shoreland/ floodplain management, business licensing compliance, and ordinances. Prior to joining the Town of Windham, Jon held various field and management roles for the City of Portland and during his last two years of service oversaw four teams in the areas of health (food service establishment) inspections, building inspections, housing safety inspections, and life safety plan reviews as the City's Inspection Director. He also has many years of experience in the fire and emergency medical services field.

Natasha Johnson
Co-owner, Meristem LLC

Bio: Natasha Johnson was born and raised working in tourism based multi-generational family businesses in Southwest Harbor. This has given her the opportunity to develop insight into the struggles and challenges of the hospitality industry as well as issues encountered in small businesses. In her adult life, Natasha has been employed in different municipal positions. In 2020, she and her husband volunteered as interested stakeholders to be part of a Marijuana Task Force, they then decided to move forward with opening an adult use cannabis shop in 2021. A year after their store had been operational, Natasha was also elected to serve her town on the Selectboard. These positions require knowledge that crosses disciplines and the ability to understand regulations and state requirements.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied for this task force because of my unique perspective which could prove helpful in advocating for responsible policy regulations for Maine's own cannabis hospitality establishments.

Richelle Ann Brossi
Executive Officer, Highbrow Industries, LLC

Bio: Richelle Brossi is the Executive Officer for Highbrow Industries, LLC. Prior to joining the cannabis industry, she spent 20+ years in the Telecom industry, performing a variety of roles throughout her tenure, including team leader, training manager, national sales support specialist and labor relations director for New York and New England. She left corporate America in June of 2018 to work for Highbrow and help the company grow and provide business structure. Richelle worked in the Manchester location while handling the books, licensing, taxes, and human resources functions. Highbrow has since added three adult use retail locations and collocation licenses for manufacturing and cultivation. Richelle currently handles all of the company's licensing and oversees daily operations.

Reason for applying to the task force: It is important for our industry to have a voice in the next step for cannabis. Maine is vacationland and the natural progression of the cannabis industry is to incorporate hospitality as source of revenue for license holders and to provide a positive, safe space for our consumers to enjoy and experience cannabis

Julie Cutting-Kelley
Owner/Director of Sales, Emerald Elevation Cannabis Co. & Owner/Executive Chef, Cure Restaurant

Bio: Julie Cutting-Kelley has been a career Chef for the past 20 years, beginning in 2004 when she graduated from Le Cordon Bleu Culinary School. She lived and worked in Portland before settling in her hometown of South Berwick and opening her American-comfort food restaurant “Cure” in 2014. She has been featured on Food Network’s Cutthroat Kitchen, Chopped, and local TV programming. In 2020 she developed her cannabis edible company “Emerald Elevation.” Currently, Julie serves on the Board of Directors for a local credit union, Restaurant Week Committee, and participates in multiple nonprofit fundraising efforts and programs.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied to join the Cannabis Hospitality Task Force for the opportunity to share my years of culinary hospitality insight and combined passion for cannabis to help shape the future of both industries to the best of my abilities.

Nate Cloutier
Director of Government Affairs, HospitalityMaine

Bio: Nate Cloutier is currently the Director of Government Affairs for HospitalityMaine, a statewide trade association representing over 1,300 restaurant and lodging operators, and industry professionals. Previously, Nate worked for five years at an Augusta-based government relations consulting group supporting clients with interests in most policy areas. Nate has held roles on local, state, and congressional candidate campaigns in addition to municipal and state referenda campaigns. Nate has always called the MidCoast home and currently lives in Topsham. He also serves on the Board of Topsham Development, Inc.

Reason for applying to the task force: The hospitality industry is the economic engine of our state and a staple of the Maine experience. I welcome opportunities to discuss new and innovative ideas to make Maine a more attractive place to live, work, and play.

Anne Sedlack, ESQ., M.S.W.
Director of Advocacy, Maine Medical Association

Bio: Anne Sedlack received her master’s degree in social work from the University of Southern Maine in 2017 and her law degree from the University of Maine School of Law in 2020. After law school, Anne clerked for the Hon. Joseph M. Jabar at the Maine Supreme Court. Before joining the Maine Medical Association, she worked in government affairs at a private practice in Maine. Anne is admitted to practice law in Maine and serves on the Public Arts Committee for the City of South Portland, the 4-H Camp & Learning Centers at Tanglewood & Blueberry Cove Board, and the Board for the Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman’s office.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied to the task force so I can share the perspectives of our physician members about the importance of moving our cannabis industry into its next chapter, where public health concerns are balanced with industry needs. I am excited to learn about other cannabis hospitality models and how we might implement one here in Maine.

Jamie Comstock
Health Promotion Manager, City of Bangor – Public Health and Community Services Department

Bio: Jamie Comstock serves as the Health Promotion Manager for the City of Bangor's Public Health and Community Services Department where she is responsible for the chronic disease prevention programming – including a suite of substance abuse prevention programs and programs to increase access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living. Jamie is a certified prevention specialist and has worked with partners locally and statewide since 2007 to build and strengthen Maine's prevention and public health systems. She was appointed by Governor Mills to serve as the prevention representative on Maine's Substance Use Disorder Services Commission.

Reason for applying to the task force: I applied for this task force to help give prevention and public health a voice in Maine cannabis matters.

Jennifer Kelley-Young, LADC, PS-C
Chronic Disease Prevention Specialist, City of Portland, Maine – Division of Public Health

Bio: Jennifer, also known as "Jiffy," has dedicated the past 18 years to the field of substance use. Jiffy is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and a Certified Prevention Specialist. For over 14 years, she served as the Clinical Intake Coordinator at a nonprofit substance use and mental health counseling program in Portland. For the past three years, she has been coordinating the Substance Use Prevention Services program at the Public Health Division for the City of Portland. Through her prevention efforts, Jiffy has established cooperative and collaborative relationships with owners, management, and staff at cannabis establishments within the city. She also conducts the mandatory "Youth Cannabis Use Prevention and Safety" training for all customer-facing cannabis vendor staff in Portland.

Reason for applying to the task force: My extensive experience in coordinating prevention services and fostering relationships within the cannabis industry equips me with valuable insights and expertise for the task force. Furthermore, I applied due to my dedication to public health and my desire to influence state-level practices. Being part of this group enables me to significantly contribute to shaping an educational framework that promotes safe and responsible cannabis use, ultimately benefiting our state and our communities.

Heather Sullivan
Senior National Licensing Manager, Curaleaf

Bio: Heather Sullivan is the Senior National Licensing Manager for Curaleaf, the world's largest cannabis company, and has been active in state and federal cannabis advocacy since the 2016 adult use legalization campaign in Maine. Heather is an expert on state and local cannabis statutes, regulations, and licensing, helping companies to secure and maintain more than 100 cannabis licenses throughout the United States. Heather served on OCP's medical cannabis workgroup in 2021, is a regular speaker at cannabis industry conferences and events, and hosted a weekly podcast on cannabis politics, business and advocacy. Heather currently volunteers as the co-Chair of the local planning board in Hollis, Maine, as an advisory board member of Beal University's Cannabis Program, and as President of her local library's Board of Trustees.

Reason for applying to the task force: I am hoping to contribute expertise in applying and winning licenses for public consumption sites in other states to developing reasonable regulations for public consumption sites in Maine.