



Via Facsimile
860-240-0207

February 23, 2007

The Joint Committee on the Judiciary
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Member of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

On behalf of the 31 coalition leaders in the State of Connecticut and the 5,000 members throughout the country that Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) represents, I am writing to encourage you to oppose House Bill 6715, which would permit the use of marijuana as medicine. I strongly urge you to oppose such legislation not only because marijuana is an illegal, schedule I drug, but also because this sends the entirely wrong message to the youth of America.

Efforts to promote the myth of "medical" marijuana severely dilute the prevention efforts that community anti-drug coalitions across America are undertaking to communicate: marijuana is dangerous and can have serious consequences.

Marijuana is the most widely abused illicit drug in the nation. According to the 2006 *Monitoring the Future* results, 42.3% of high school seniors have tried marijuana, with 18.3% of them reporting that they have used marijuana in the last 30 days.

Research shows that the decline in the use of any illegal drug is directly related to its perception of harm or risk by the user. Advertising marijuana as medicine sends the wrong message to America's youth – that marijuana is not dangerous. To the contrary, marijuana, whether used for medicinal or recreational purposes, is both dangerous and addictive. This is evidenced by the fact that those states which have implemented "medical" marijuana ballot initiatives have some of the highest addiction rates in the country. In those states where marijuana has been equated with medicine, the perception of harm relating to that drug has been drastically reduced and social norms to reinforce "no use" messages, have been undermined. In fact, according to the *State Estimates of Substance Use from the 2003–2004 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*, released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in February of 2005, most of the states where "medical" marijuana ballot initiatives have passed were clustered at or near the bottom of the list in terms of the perception of great risk associated with smoking marijuana once a month.

The often cited 1999 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report states that "because of the health risks associated with smoking, smoking marijuana should generally not be recommended for long-term medicinal use." Further, Dr. Jon A. Benson of the IOM stated that "while we see a future in the development of chemically defined cannabinoid drugs, we see little future in smoked marijuana as a medicine."

While neither CADCA nor its members wish to prolong the pain of anyone suffering from a long-term illness, there are other, more effective treatments available. The FDA has, in fact, approved a number of safe and effective medicines that are available for all of the conditions that smoked marijuana purports to alleviate, including, but not limited to, Marinol. It does not, however, support the use of "medical" marijuana. In fact, in April of 2006, the FDA concluded that "no sound scientific studies supported medical use of marijuana for treatment in the United States, and no animal or human data supported the safety or efficacy of marijuana for general medical use." The FDA also declared that the measures in those states that have passed medical marijuana laws "are inconsistent with efforts to ensure that medications undergo the rigorous scientific scrutiny of the FDA approval process and are proven safe and effective."

Clearly, despite the efforts to prove otherwise, the legalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes is having a deleterious effect on youth, communities and states where these ballot initiatives have passed. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose any legislation which would make legal the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. Thank you for your consideration in this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Arthur T. Dean
Major General, U.S. Army, Retired
Chairman and CEO