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February 23, 2007

To: The CT Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Please accept this letter as testimony in opposition to H.B. 6715.

A well-organized campaign to legalize marijuana under the guise of medicine is underway across the US. A heavily financed pro marijuana legalization lobby is using "compassion" to sell the notion to legislators that smoking a dangerous, psychoactive weed can alleviate numerous medical problems. These claims are false and dangerous.

The marijuana plant is far too complex, unstable, and harmful to be approved as a medicine. It meets none of the criteria established to assure safety and efficacy. Thus, Federal Drug Administration (FDA) experts have repeatedly rejected marijuana for medicinal use. I quote from an FDA press release dated April 20, 2006:

"Claims have been advanced asserting smoked marijuana has a value in treating various medical conditions. Some have argued that herbal marijuana is a safe and effective medication and that it should be made available to people who suffer from a number of ailments upon a doctor's recommendation, even though it is not an approved drug." ... "Efforts that seek to bypass the FDA drug approval process would not serve the interests of public health because they might expose patients to unsafe and ineffective drug products. FDA has not approved smoked marijuana for any condition or disease indication."

Although research may find individual cannabinoids in *cannabis sativa* (marijuana) to be beneficial, use of the whole plant, composed of over 450 different compounds, has not been scientifically shown to be safe or medically effective. The American Medical Association, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Glaucoma Society, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the American Cancer Society have all rejected smoked marijuana as a medicine.

Legalizing a psychoactive plant that has not passed scientific muster would be irresponsible – compromising law enforcement efforts and endangering public health and safety.

Respectfully,

Joan Bellm
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