

Testimony In Support Of:

SB 349 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PENALTY FOR POSSESSION OF A
SMALL AMOUNT OF MARIJUANA

and

HB 6581 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENHANCED PENALTY FOR THE SALE OR
POSSESSION OF DRUGS NEAR SCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS AND PUBLIC
HOUSING PROJECTS.

March 24,2009

Connecticut Joint Judiciary Committee

Thank you Co-Chairs, Senator McDonald and Representative Lawlor, and members of the Joint Judiciary Committee for listening to my testimony today. I am Amanda Stauble from Glastonbury, CT and am here today in full support of SB 349 An Act Concerning the Penalty for Possession of a Small Amount of Marijuana, as well as HB 6581, An Act Concerning the Enhanced Penalty for the Sale or Possession of Drugs Near Schools, Day Care Centers and Public Housing Projects.

The inherent problem with current legislation surrounding marijuana policy is that it is causing more harm than good. People arrested for marijuana possession in Connecticut face arrest, receive criminal records, can lose Federal Financial Aid, and can be put on probation or parole. We break up families, ruin the chances for many of our citizens to obtain upstanding jobs, and bog down our court system with non-violent drug offenses, all while costing the state millions. The laws and arrests are in an attempt to keep cannabis off of the street and out of the hands of children. However, it's unrealistic to think we can actually eliminate drugs from our towns and cities; we can't even keep them out of our prisons with forty foot walls and strip searches. As for accessibility for our youth, it's certainly easier for my younger brother in high school to get his hands on cannabis than beer if he wanted to since all he has to do is ask a friend rather than a store clerk.

Under current state law, any drug activity within 1500 feet of schools, day care centers, and public housing projects are subject to harsher penalties. Connecticut residents who live in cities, especially low income residents, and often people of color, are disproportionately penalized for drug infractions than all other populations. Almost anywhere you are in Hartford can be held to these higher standards. Can we justify the fact that if I am arrested for possession of marijuana in Glastonbury, the consequences will be different for my friend who is arrested fifteen minutes down the road for the same offense? The result of these non-sensible drug laws is a flooding of the system with non-violent drug offenders who otherwise would have no contact with the courts or jails, especially young, people of color. We are wasting our resources of police and funds by concerning ourselves with arresting adult, cannabis consumers. We have nothing to lose by

adopting SB 349 and HB 6581, but are throwing away Connecticut citizens tax dollars and causing significant damage to the families affected by these laws every minute that we don't.

Thank you,

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