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Testimony delivered to the Judiciary Committee in opposition to SB-349, an act concerning the penalty for possession of a small amount of marijuana
Tuesday, March 24, 2009

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, Senator Kissel, Representative O'Neill, other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to proposed SB-349, an act concerning the penalty for possession of a small amount of marijuana.

I oppose this bill for a number of reasons:

- Reducing the cost of law enforcement must not be used as a criterion for determining the status of a criminal offense. Doing so sets an unacceptable precedent. What then prevents our legislators from conducting a sweeping review of all types of criminal offenses and introducing widespread reductions of penalties in order to save money? It is absurd even to suggest that expense considerations should replace the ethical principles underlying a system of laws.
- Although opinions vary on the degree of toxicity and addictiveness of marijuana, there is general agreement that it is a toxic substance, and that smoking it is harmful. Reducing the penalties for possession of any amount, however small, will increase its use. Facilitating the use of a toxic substance is simply not a good thing, under any circumstances.
- Determination of what is and is not a "small amount" of marijuana is necessarily arbitrary. Once an initial determination is made, as it is in this bill, what prevents it from being changed in the future? This bill opens the door to further reductions in penalties with the passage of time.
- The language of this bill does not make possession of any amount of marijuana legal in the State of Connecticut. It is, however, difficult to believe that the bill is not an attempt to move Connecticut one step closer to legalization on the state level. There are many good arguments against making marijuana legal, and I will not enumerate them here. My point is to call attention to the possible consequences of passage of this bill.

At a time when so many problems related to the State budget, to employment, to healthcare, and to essential services need our legislators' urgent attention, it is disappointing to see this bill on the legislative agenda. As a cost-cutting measure, it is an embarrassment. As a measure for dealing effectively with a toxic substance, it is illogical and potentially harmful. I therefore ask you, respectfully, to reject it.

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