

Hello members of the Judiciary,

My name is Katlin Tyrol; I'm a senior at University of Connecticut and I'm here this morning to testify in favor of H.B. No. 6566, S.B. No. 1098, Governor's S.B. No. 1015, and all other initiatives to further explore the prospect of medicinal marijuana in Connecticut, but in order to do so I'd like to tell you a story.

Nine years ago, one of my family members whose identity shall remain ambiguous for her protection, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer; for the purpose of this testimony, we will call her "Sarah". "Sarah" was only thirty-seven years old at the time so, needless to say, her diagnosis came as a devastating blow to my family. The doctors gave her a mere six months to live. Because her healthcare was minimal, my mother took "Sarah" into our home and acted as her primary caregiver. It was very difficult for me to digest what was going on around me, as I at only twelve years old, and had never had to face illness first hand in my life. "Sarah" was like a second mother to me and to see her body so frail and in so much pain was heartbreaking. Miraculously, her six months to live was stretched to about nine years. Our family was exuberant; we simply could not believe how lucky we were.

Then in June of 2010, "Sarah's" cancer came out of remission. The tumors had grown back completely in her stomach and had spread to her lungs and beyond. She began chemotherapy treatment immediately, but in time the doctors said that the treatment wouldn't work. Our family continued to hope for a miracle, and "Sarah" kept up with the chemo regardless of the fruitless outcome. She was in a state of constant hurt and illness because of the chemo. In an attempt to alleviate her pain, the doctors prescribed her medication that, according to "Sarah", only made matters worse. The medication was not strong enough and also exacerbated the nausea she felt from the chemotherapy.

This was when "Sarah", wedged between a rock and a hard place, decided to take matters into her own hands. This past January, she began to use marijuana for its medicinal benefits. She found that if she smoked marijuana it did wonders to help alleviate the physical pain she was constantly in. "Sarah" also found that if she smoked marijuana, she developed an appetite. Prior to this, I cannot remember the last time I saw her eat more than a bite or two of nourishment that her body so desperately needed. "Sarah" found solace in a substance that she undoubtedly needed. She was relieved of her immense pain and was able to feed herself properly for the first time in months. Today, "Sarah" is in the hospital, spending her final days with doctors and family members.

I sit here this morning to testify in favor of these medicinal marijuana bills because "Sarah" cannot. To think that during her final months, in an attempt to sustain a decent quality of life: a life free of pain; to think that "Sarah" was made to feel ashamed of her actions is heartbreaking. To think that this poor woman ravaged by cancer and made frail by loss of appetite, may have identified herself as a criminal has brought me to tears. That is why I ask that you vote in favor of medicinal marijuana in Connecticut, because men and women like my "Sarah" deserve the choice.

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