

Dear Chairman Eric Coleman, Chairman Gerald Fox, Ranking Member John Kissel, Ranking Member John Hetherington and other distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony to Raised Bills SB953 concerning nonviolent drug possession offenses, SB1014 concerning the penalty for certain nonviolent drug offenses, SB952 concerning the enhanced penalty for the sale or possession drugs near schools, day care centers, and public housing projects and SB1015 concerning the palliative use of Marijuana (medical marijuana).

First I would like to address Bills SB953, SB952 and SB1014. I am here not to discuss the facts of the physical and mental harm marijuana has. I am here to tell you that I have experienced first hand what marijuana can do to a family. On May 5, 2004 I found my son Daniel who had turned 20 on April 18 in his bed already gone from a heroin overdose. You are probably thinking well that's heroin -- not marijuana. Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to heroin which very likely leads to the end of life. Alcohol and Marijuana are drugs that teens and preteens will try for many reasons such as, peer pressure, stress, inquisitiveness. With all the media exposure to celebrities and drug commercials there seems to be a surge of thinking that Marijuana and drugs are okay for kids. My son started smoking when he was 14 years old and then went on to cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, and finally after priding himself on doing anything but heroin, gave in to that drug as well. When one person in the family is using marijuana, it affects the whole family. I used to search his room and find homemade pipes. I used to be up when he came home to see if he smelled of marijuana. I wanted to believe his lies. When he was seeing a drug counselor and had to give urine each week, one time he even asked his little brother for urine because he had smoked marijuana. When we finally had evidence that he couldn't refute, he agreed to go to Rehab. Dan really wanted to stop doing drugs. Dan was a smart and funny son who loved his parents, 2 brothers and sister. He was the oldest and would watch over them whether we were on vacation all together or at home. Dan was a respectful young man who even attended Norwalk Community College for a semester and worked at The Outdoor Sports Shop in town. When a teenager starts drinking or smoking, they don't know how addiction can affect them. When he came home from Rehab after 10 days he thought he could try it again but the heroin was too strong and his resistance was low.

Besides being a gateway drug, marijuana affects many parts of the brain and I have seen with my children that it can make one so unmotivated to do anything. Dan and Brian (my second oldest) have failed classes because of smoking Marijuana and are then too lazy to go to school. My daughter got involved in that as well after Dan died. My husband and I sent her to a lock down school where she received a lot of therapy. Now she has just graduated University of CT in psychology, is planning to go on for her Masters Degree and become a drug counselor to young adults. If these proposed bills are passed, there will be a very high need for drug counselors in CT.

By lowering the penalties of possessing Marijuana, the next generation will do poorer in school and will look to more exotic drugs. I understand the State is in serious financial trouble but compromising our youth is not the answer. On the first day of high school my youngest son Patrick, who is now 20, told me that the first thing he learned was who sold what drug. He couldn't believe that marijuana, pills, and ecstasy were so easy to obtain. To reduce the drug free zones is ludicrous. In any

high school in our State and even many middle schools it is already so easy to obtain drugs. Please do not make it any easier. If anything the laws should be stricter!

These proposed Bills are sending the wrong message to children and adults alike. If the State can ignore the Federal Government's laws about Marijuana, why should the people of CT have to obey the laws of our State. Local Governments need to respect the State Government and the State Government needs to respect the Federal Government. Until the time the Federal Government changes the Controlled Substances Act, CT should not pass any of these proposed bills.

In regards to proposed Bill SB1015 concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana this should not be passed for reasons stated above but also because this bill is asking Medical Doctors to go against their oath in treating people. A few years ago at the Wilton Library there was a discussion on the pros and cons of this proposed Bill. A medical doctor had agreed to be there to discuss the pros of medical marijuana. After doing much research, she stated that in good standing as a doctor she could not prescribe a plant to someone when she did not know how strong it would be, how it would be obtained and how often it would be smoked. In good conscience as a Doctor she thought it very dangerous to prescribe "a plant" with so many unknowns. This would be asking doctors all over the state to ignore Federal Law as well as compromising their oath as a medical professional. Allowing people to grow their own plants is a recipe for disaster. Who is going to monitor 4 plants only 4 feet high? Who is going to watch when children come over to visit loved ones if they are taking a few leaves? Who is going to watch the caretakers? How many people are going to get prescriptions when they don't really need them? This is a problem already in the States that allow medical marijuana. There are many new laws banning cigarette smoke in public places because of second hand smoke. What about second hand smoke of Marijuana? It is just as bad as cigarettes. According to NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse) marijuana contains 50 to 70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke.

With all the pain killer medicines that can already be prescribed, there is also cannabinoid-based medications such as Marinol and Cesamet (pill form and FDA approved). Sativex which is formulated as a mouth spray is new and a chemically pure mixture of plant-derived THC. This is currently approved in Canada and parts of Europe. These forms of Marijuana are much safer to control amongst patients and just as effective. I find it hard to believe with the many prescribed painkillers that doctors can prescribe, marijuana is the only drug that would work. As it is, prescribed painkillers is a major problem in our country for youth and adults. Allowing medical marijuana will just exacerbate this problem.

Thank you for this time to listen to my reasons opposing these proposed bills. Even though there are so many reasons to vote these bills down, the main point is that I have seen how marijuana can ruin one's life and passing these bills will only increase the issues associated with drug abuse.

Sincerely,

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