



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
March 14, 2011

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Senate Bill 1015 - An Act The Palliative Use Of Marijuana

The Department of Public Health supports Senate Bill 1015:

This bill offers a pragmatic, compassionate approach to provide relief from suffering for Connecticut residents living with severely painful and debilitating conditions. Additionally, it provides physicians with a method of care that can decrease chronic pain and ensure that qualifying patients do not deteriorate further due to malnutrition.

Under the Governor's proposal, patients living with the following conditions would qualify to possess and use marijuana under a physician certification:

- Cancer
- Glaucoma
- HIV/AIDS
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Damage to the spinal cord indicating intractable spasticity
- Epilepsy
- Cachexia
- Wasting syndrome

Certain symptoms common to many of these conditions include chronic pain, neuropathy, nausea, vomiting and severe decrease in appetite. Smoking marijuana is shown to be an effective treatment for each of these symptoms. Beyond the efficacy of marijuana to relieve these symptoms, the method of delivery through marijuana cigarettes circumvents complications caused by gastrointestinal distress associated with several of these conditions. Additionally, marijuana can reduce symptoms caused or exacerbated by the treatments for several of these conditions. For example, many types of chemotherapy create appetite and digestive problems that limit a patient's ability and desire to consume sufficient nutrients to enable their body to recover from the disease. Also, HIV patients suffering from regular nausea and vomiting may lose unhealthy amounts of weight and skip doses of prescribed medications. Non-compliance with HIV medications can result in the development of medication-resistant strains of HIV that limit the ability to treat the patient or others that may become infected with the strain. .

While DPH recognizes that many would advocate for the use of alternative treatment methods utilizing marijuana's active ingredient, *tetrahydrocannabinol* or THC, such treatments have not proven to be as effective as marijuana up to this point. Marinol, one such drug approved by the FDA, does not work for all patients and generally has decreased effectiveness because of a reliance on oral administration. This drug can also take as long as three hours to relieve symptoms. In the face of these limitations, it is necessary to offer physicians and patients a more effective option. By adopting this proposal, the legislature will offer these people just such an option.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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