

Bill 953

AN ACT CONCERNING NONVIOLENT DRUG OFFENSES

To establish a more rational drug policy by making the possession of less than one ounce of marijuana and the possession or use of drug paraphernalia infractions rather than misdemeanors.

David Hyde

I would like to thank the Committee and Staff for allowing me to speak before you today.

I have conducted an unscientific poll of students and teachers at WestConn and Naugatuck Community College. A total of 128 individuals, which included 20 teachers, were polled randomly. 75% of teachers supported decriminalization of an ounce or less. 73% of students ranging in age from 18-35 supported decriminalization. Those that did not support decriminalization supported medicinal marijuana.

The consensus among economists is that liberalization of marijuana laws will result in net budgetary savings for the State's Criminal Justice System. Money saved may be utilized to fund rehab for people with more serious addiction problems, and law enforcement can be deployed to combat hard drugs and violent crime. Research from two separate studies showed negligible impact on DUI rates in decriminalized jurisdictions. Even heavy smokers are only slightly impaired, compared with alcohol users behind the wheel. Statistics from states that decriminalized marijuana, showed no significant increase in drug abuse rates.

In conclusion, the time is right for this change in Connecticut. A carefully crafted law should allow the Criminal Justice System to recognize and provide help to minors and other abusers, while permitting adult citizens to carry on in the privacy of their own lives without fear of criminal prosecution.

This concludes my prepared remarks. As requested, I will be submitting my detailed report to Staff this week. At this time I would like to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much for your time.