



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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INTERNSHIP COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2011
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

RE: S.B. NO. 1015, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA.

Dear Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox, Ranking Member Kissel, Ranking Member Hetherington and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am here today to seek support for Governor's Bill 1015, An Act Concerning The Palliative Use of Marijuana.

As many of you know, I have been supporting this bill, or similar versions of this bill, for the past nine years. Over those nine years, I have shared my personal story, a story of both pain and hope. The pain was watching my husband at that time waste away from the side-effects of chemotherapy and radiation. The pain was his inability to find a legal prescription drug that would help him ease his suffering. The hope was in finding a medical doctor at the Veteran's Hospital in Boston who was willing to tell us about the therapeutic effects of marijuana. I soon learned that the medical doctor was correct. For some people, marijuana is the only medicine that can help – while still allowing for a quality of life.

For years now, I have heard stories similar to my own; hundreds of stories from people who desperately want to follow their doctor's advice, but they are afraid. For me, this is no longer about my own experiences with the medical use of marijuana; it is much bigger than that. This is about the thousands of people in CT who are using marijuana, with a doctor's blessing, but who live in fear. This is about the people who want to obtain marijuana for their terminally ill father, or their desperately sick brother, but they fear they will be arrested, incarcerated and ruined. For me, and for these people, this is a battle to give a small comfort, a small peace of mind, to those who need it the most. An Act Concerning The Palliative Use of Marijuana is a long name for a simple concept – comfort for patients. I ask you today, if you were caring for a very sick loved one, would you not want to try everything possible to ease their pain?

I have worked on medical marijuana laws across the country and I can say that the Governor's bill, which is similar to the bill that passed the House and Senate in 2007, is well crafted and can easily

work effectively and efficiently in Connecticut. The following areas are addressed providing a very defined regulatory framework:

- Clearly defines what illnesses a doctor can recommend marijuana for. I suggest adding people who are receiving services under hospice to this list.
- Limits the amount of marijuana to four plants and one ounce.
- Limits the use to private and secure areas and never on any public property or school ground and not in sight of others.
- Limits the number of caregivers to one, and that caregiver cannot have a drug conviction.
- Defines the role of DCP as the regulatory agency.
- States that health insurance will not cover its use.
- Protects doctor's who provide certifications to patients for medical marijuana use.
- Adds a Class A misdemeanor for any person who makes a fraudulent representation to law enforcement relating to the written certification.
- Allows for the collection of fees so the implementation of this bill has no fiscal impact.

As this bill moves forward, members of the General Assembly will be asked to consider the possible message this sends to children. I submit to you that the message is simple: Marijuana is a drug, a strong and powerful drug that should be treated like any other drug in the medicine cabinet. Parents should continue to educate children that medicine can be dangerous and must be used under the supervision of a medical doctor. There are stronger, more dangerous substances than marijuana in most medicine cabinets today.

Additionally, the American Medical Association just reversed its previous position and now has stated that more clinical studies should be done on marijuana. (Previously, the AMA stated that there was no therapeutic value to marijuana).

I urge the committee to support this bill and allow a doctor and a patient to decide what is in that patient's best interest.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Bacchiochi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Penny Bacchiochi