

**Blanchard, Deborah**

HB 5389

**From:** Brian C- [calcan22@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 06, 2012 6:08 PM  
**To:** judiciary@cga.ct.gov  
**Subject:** More testimony for 3/7/12

Hello, My name is Brian Calabrese. I submitted written testimony for the public hearing regarding medical marijuana tomorrow 3/7/12. I noticed online, that i submitted two of the same articles accidentally (I was in a hurry to get the mail out). Here is another incredibly interesting article that I meant to submit, hopefully this can be distributed with the rest of my testimony. Thanks for everything! -Brian Calabrese

<http://www.independentcollegian.com/news/marijuana-may-help-binge-drinking-brain-1.1822653>

## Marijuana may help binge-drinking brain

By Kevin Moore

**Published:** Thursday, August 27, 2009

Binge drinkers who also smoke marijuana may suffer less brain damage than drinkers who do not smoke marijuana, according to a recent study done by researchers at the University of California, San Diego and published by Neurotoxicology and Teratology magazine.

The study, which was performed and published in late July, analyzed brain scans of 16 to 19-year-old males and females to compare the amount of white brain matter damage. White brain matter contains nerve fibers and is one of the two components of the central nervous system, according to the National Institutes of Health's Web site.

The study compared the damage to white brain matter between those who regularly engage in binge drinking and marijuana usage to those who solely participated in binge drinking and those who did neither. For the purpose of this study, binge drinking was defined as having five drinks during one sitting for males and four drinks during one sitting for females.

The results of the study showed those who only participated in binge drinking had damage in all eight sections of the brain, while those who used marijuana regularly only showed damage in three out of the eight sections. "Clearly, the marijuana group did better," said Director of Communication for the Marijuana Policy Project Bruce Mirken. "The marijuana plant is a heavy carrier of cannabinoids, of which there is much evidence to suggest that they can serve as a neural protector.

**In fact, the government holds a patent on cannabinoids as a neural protector of brain matter,**" Mirken said. The project was meant to track the residual effects of long-term behavior, and did not need to be conducted immediately following binge drinking, Mirken said.

"There is no question alcohol in large quantities is bad for you. This study clearly implies that alcohol is more dangerous than marijuana. This has been confirmed by other studies as well," he said. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse and Addiction, marijuana generally has a negative effect on smokers' learning and memory abilities.

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Research by the NIDAA shows the adverse effects of marijuana on learning and memory abilities can last for days or weeks after the acute effects of the drug wears off. As a result, someone who smokes marijuana every day may be functioning at a suboptimal intellectual level all of the time. The NIDAA reports long-term effects of marijuana abuse can include some changes in the brain similar to those seen after long term abuse of other major drugs, including alcohol.

The National Institute of Drug Abuse and Addiction also reports marijuana smoke contains some of the same, and sometimes even more, of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke. The study did not examine or report on any brain damage or negative effects posed solely by marijuana usage. "There is some controversy of the neural effects of marijuana. It is questionable if there is any kind of long-term effect. Some tests have shown an effect on executive function, the ability to make decisions. But long term alcohol abuse can actually shrink the brain. The brain of a severe alcoholic is visibly smaller to the naked eye," Mirken said.

The study does not mention the effects concerning casual drinking, but Mirken said it is reasonable to assume there are some, though much less severe, effects related to casual drinking. The Marijuana Policy Project is an organization seeking to change laws and policy regarding marijuana. "We want laws in line with the findings. We want it legalized, yes, but also taxed and regulated just like alcohol," Mirken said

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