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My name is Lindsey Beck. I am a 27-year-old lifelong resident of Connecticut. I have Crohn's disease, which is a chronic digestive disorder, as well as PTSD. Both of these disorders have led to my becoming disabled. Both of these disorders have been significantly improved through my use of marijuana; to the point where I believe, if given the right to utilize it medicinally to its full effect, my status as 'disabled' would no longer be necessary. I came here last year, for my first time, as many others in my position, requesting you to do what is right. As elected officials of this state, it is up to you to ensure that the public is listened to; however, I am afraid we were not heard. We spoke loud and clear, the polls supported us astronomically, and still, we did not succeed. This year, I am not so humble. Humility is a constant for the disabled, but it is not I who should feel humiliated at this juncture. The lack of common sense displayed here has overwhelmed me, leaving me unsure in what direction to proceed. For this reason, my appeal to you today will be as straight forward and simple as I can make it- I am a human being; whatever it is you are able to feel, I can feel; whatever it is you are able to dream, I can dream; my life is no less valuable than yours is.

I put my faith into this system at a young age; it was how I was raised, what I was taught as the right thing to do. I pride myself on my morality. I have made it a point in life to do what is right, even when that is not always easy. I have not always been successful, but I can at least say I have always tried. That is why, at age 24, when my doctors told me to apply the Fentanyl patch to my body, I listened. I thought, as most do, that they knew better than I did. I knew that narcotics were dangerous, but the thought of not being able to play with my child, not working, and not continuing my education, was too much to bear. Therefore, I did what I was told would make me feel better. Unfortunately, this did not make me feel better. In fact, I can go so far as to say that this medication, that is legal and often prescribed to those in chronic pain, completely devalued my life and ruined my body. I did not detail my experience to you last year, as it was still too much of a reality for me at the time to communicate. I will take the opportunity to tell you now. For two years, I was bedridden. If I left my house, I was confined to a wheelchair. My hair fell out, I developed bedsores, and it was not uncommon for rashes to cover my body. I was lucky to shower once a week and my teeth became so riddled with cavities I spent one day every week at a dentist this summer for nearly two months. I do not remember a time when my body was not lined in a film of sweat. I often looked as though I had just exited a shower, the sweat dripping from my hair and face constantly. This was far from the worst of it, though. You see, this particular medication has the ability to change your personality. In this time that I was secluded from society, I had also secluded myself from all those who love me. I tend to think that had I not been forced to tolerate myself, I would not have. I was quick to anger, but besides that and frustration there were few moods I experienced. For these two years, I was as good as alone in my head with a monster. What I find so disenchanting, though, is that this was not once due to my illnesses, it was due to my treatment. I want this point to sink in, so let me repeat myself; it is not Crohn's disease or the PTSD that left me in this state of distress, it was the medicine prescribed to me, approved by you, that took these two years of my life from me. I am fortunate that is all that was taken, however part of me continues to wonder why anything was taken at all when it was so obviously unnecessary.

About a month after I spoke with you last year, my son and I were playing at home. He began having an anxiety attack. He is 8 years old. As I held him in my arms, rocking him back and forth, simply

trying to do whatever it was I could do to calm him, I could not help but wonder why this was happening. Once he was able to calm himself and return to a regular state of mind, I asked him what was wrong. He said he was scared, scared I would get sick again. It was his fear that I would return to the state I had been in for too much of his life that triggered this anxiety. It is a feeling of guilt, no matter how little may be my fault, which I will live with forever. I told my son that I would never again be sick like I was. I let him know that surely there will be days that I do not feel well; in fact, these days will be quite common. But never again will I be confined to a bed, because never again will I allow others to dictate what is put into my body in the way of treatment when common sense (along with all the facts) says better. I cannot change his past and I cannot change mine. What I have endured at the hands of this system is unfair, but what is done, is done. What I must do now is to ensure that no one else is treated in this manner. The idea that this is a singular situation is unfounded, and I will tell you why. My brother also suffers from Crohn's disease and went to a pain-management clinic this past December. He was prescribed the Fentanyl patch; therefore, the reality that this is a problem does not seem to escape me. After a few weeks, he refused to put that patch near him again. He said he could not imagine a few years. I have educated myself more fully on this drug since my detox off it, and let me enlighten you to the fact that the Fentanyl patch is 27 times the strength of pure heroin. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that it is more likely for this patch to be a gateway drug than marijuana. The only reason it is not, is that it is legal. What kind of a society is this where drugs such as these are prescribed to people like me without a second thought, and something as simple as marijuana in its natural state is viewed upon as dangerous?

There are so many things that I wish I had time to say, but I am sure that we all feel this way. So let me end by saying this:

If you had asked me when I was in grade school what I thought I would be doing today, my answer never would have been to be standing before you right now in hopes of appealing to your sense of humanity and compassion. I would have told you that I wanted to be an anthropologist, or maybe an archeologist, or maybe an infectious disease specialist. Not in a million years did I think that as a young adult I would become all the things I have been. But when I look at my son, I am reminded that all of those dreams I had can still come true. I am going to do great things with my life one way or another, and I know that he will, too. I ask you that we start acting like adults and put these silly games behind us. The time that has been wasted on such trivial debates should be over. More specifically, I wish to stop wasting my own time, which I am being forced to do as long as this is an issue. It would be nice to be given the opportunity to manage my disease the best way I know how. Currently, that way is using marijuana. So I beg of you to please, let me go back to school; all I want to do is become a contributing member of society. It would be wonderful if that while I did this I could stop being afraid that what is helping me progress could also lead to my incarceration. The most important thing that is to be done today, though, is to listen; listen to your people, the ones who gave you the privilege of the positions you hold right now. Listen to us and realize that your decision here today, no matter how silly the topic, is no small matter in our lives. Listen to us, and remember that we are just as human as you are; whatever it is we feel, you may one day feel, too. Therefore, the relief we seek today, you may one day find yourself seeking, too.