

**TESTIMONY OF
PETER C. SMITH
TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

H.B. No. 5389 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA.

March 7, 2012

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Peter Smith and I am here to testify in support of HB 5389 An Act Concerning the Palliative use of Marijuana. I have a client that that has an interest in the bill before you today but I am not here to testify on their behalf, my testimony is as a parent of a young adult who was diagnosed with cancer. I thank the committee for raising the medical marijuana bill being heard today and appreciate the opportunity to add my perspective to the discussion.

On July 11, 2008 my 21 year old son, Mike was diagnosed with Burkitt's Lymphoma and our family's journey into the world of cancer and chemotherapy began. I can still remember that Friday when I got the call, our world began to move at 100 miles an hour. My wife and I were suddenly pushed to make life and death decisions for our child without the experience or expertise to make those decisions.

Looking back I can honestly say we were fortunate, yes fortunate in the fact that my son's lymphoma appeared on his neck and not in his abdomen, allowing for earlier detection, he was diagnosed with a stage II lymphoma not stage IV, fortunate that my wife had great health insurance and fortunate that Yale Cancer center was 10 miles from our home.

We met with Mike's medical team and his treatment was mapped out. It quickly become clear the chemotherapy regiment needed to destroy the cancer and save his life would create significant short and long term side effects. The questions and concerns began to roll in, that 100 mile an hour world began to move faster, it was in that meeting we began to think about medical marijuana as an option to help our son. As a parent you will do whatever you have to do to help your child, if the medical teams use of oxycodone and other regiments of pain and anti nausea medications didn't work we were prepared to find him marijuana. If Mike had said, "Dad, I need it," we would not have hesitated and been off to who knows where to find it, buy it and supply it. There we were a couple of fifty year old parents wondering where to buy marijuana for our 21 year old son. If this was 1976 and we were still in high

school, we probably could have figured it out but in 2008 our knowledge of the supply chain was long gone. In hind sight the question appeared before the need arrived but that is what caregivers do, they plan ahead, preparing for the next obstacle or challenge in their path.

As we said before we were fortunate, throughout the six hospitalizations and thirty days in the hospital Mike never asked for it. His body tolerated the treatment, despite having 10 out of 10 pain, pain which oxycodone only decreased to a 6, he actively choose to avoid taking oxycodone at the times when pain was not excruciating, because of the cognitive side effects. We learned from his oncologist each patient is different and genetics has a lot to do with tolerance, again we were fortunate.

Today in Connecticut we have a situation where caregivers are forced to find illegal sources to supply their loved ones with treatment that can help alleviate pain and discomfort. The bill before you can ensure that care givers are not forced on to the street to buy marijuana, with no safe guards, no protection and no quality control of the product. HB 5389 creates a well-defined system of marijuana producers and pharmacist run dispensaries that must be licensed and regulated by the Department of Consumer Protection.

In 2008 my son joined the growing list of cancer survivors or as he likes to call it "the club" of cancer survivors, at the same time his family joined the club of care givers who will do whatever it takes to care for our loved ones. Please make 2012 the year that Connecticut joins with 16 other states around the country that allow patients to access medical marijuana without going on the streets to find a drug dealer.

Thank you