

TESTIMONY of THERAPLANT

Before the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee

March 13, 2015

IN SUPPORT OF:

S.B. No. 1064 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA.

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ethan Ruby and I am the founder and CEO of Theraplant. Theraplant is pleased today to present this testimony in support of S.B. No. 1064 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA.

My name is Ethan Ruby and I am a current patient of the medical marijuana program, as well as CEO of Theraplant, one of the four licensed production facilities in the state. My story begins when life changed forever on November 29, 2000. I was living in New York at the time and was the pedestrian victim of a chain-reaction car crash that began with a driver running a red light. The accident nearly took my life and will to live, but after seven weeks in intensive care followed by eight weeks at a rehabilitative hospital, I emerged as a T6 paraplegic with a mission to survive this spinal cord injury by devoting my energy to the greater good.

While I have since made the most of the life I nearly lost, I have done so while suffering from PTSD and constant, excruciating pain in my legs and abdomen. To treat these debilitating conditions, I initially explored traditional pharmaceutical approaches, only to find that they left me unable to function mentally at the level my life demanded. Desperate for relief without negative side effects, I began to explore alternative therapies. This search led me to medical marijuana. My research revealed to me that certain strains of cannabis would relieve my pain and treat my PTSD, but not cloud my thinking or judgment. As a result, I decided to move my family to CO in 2000, in order to legally take advantage of this life-altering therapy and being to investigate the science behind a medicine that allowed me to have a more productive, meaningful life.

After experiencing such a drastic increase in the quality of my life from medical marijuana, I immediately wanted to share my relief with others. I spent a year studying the intricacies of the medical marijuana industry in Colorado and eventually identified an ideal opportunity in Connecticut to bring high-quality, safe medical marijuana to patients who could benefit from its palliative use. With the State's groundbreaking regulations, Connecticut offered the perfect environment for me to pursue the advancement of the science and efficacy of medical marijuana.

In January 2013, Theraplant became one of 4 licensed producers for the state of Connecticut, I thank you for this honor and distinction and my entire company has worked tirelessly to deliver on this awesome responsibility you have trusted us with. I have assembled a team of professionals with a breadth of experience in the industry and a firm commitment to my mission as a responsible steward of this alternative medicine. Theraplant's ultimate goal is to formally explore the efficacy of different plant strains for the treatment of specific medical conditions, a situation for which currently only anecdotal evidence exists. I am proud to say that my personal wish to help patients suffering from debilitating conditions gain safe and reliable access to unadulterated medicine by making Theraplant a model of

scientific advancement, legal compliance, security and social justice.

This bill makes several important changes to the existing regulatory program for medical marijuana in the state. Among these are (1) authorizing the Commissioner of DCP to approve medical marijuana research programs, (2) including nurses within the scope of professionals who are provided immunity for administering medical marijuana to qualifying patients, (3) allowing the palliative use of medical marijuana in the presence of individuals younger than eighteen, as long as the user is a qualifying patient or research program subject, (4) establishing certification criteria for qualifying patients younger than eighteen, and (5) authorizing the Commissioner of DCP to approve medical marijuana research programs.

Allowing for the development and implementation of research is critical to ensuring that we are able to (1) determine the full range of beneficial treatments using medical marijuana, rather than simply relying on happenstance or anecdotal evidence to substantiate benefits for particular conditions, and (2) tailor varieties of medical marijuana to help alleviate particular conditions in the most effective manner.

Much of the discussion that the Board of Physicians for the Connecticut Medical Marijuana program has when reviewing petitions to add debilitating conditions to the state-approved list for which medical marijuana may be recommended involves the relative paucity of clinical studies on the benefits of medical marijuana for a given condition. One reason for this lack of clinical data has been the historical classification of marijuana as an "illegal substance." Clinicians and researchers have avoided the topic for fear of repercussions or the stigma associated with the topic. Fortunately, Connecticut is in a position to change that and to contribute the growing body of scientific literature on the palliative benefits of medical marijuana.

Allowing the use of medical marijuana by persons under the age of eighteen, with appropriate conditions as set forth in the bill, is also a step in the right direction. Having recognized the medical benefits of marijuana for certain conditions it simply doesn't make sense to exclude any class of patients from receiving the benefits of effective treatment. In permitting minors to use medical marijuana to treat their approved conditions, Connecticut is not breaking any new ground. Currently, Michigan, California, Maine and Colorado permit minors to qualify for medical marijuana to treat their conditions. We should gain from their vetting of this important application.

Typically, the strains of medical marijuana that are prescribed for children are those high in CBD, the non-psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, and low in THC. Moreover, these strains are most often administered in liquid or capsule form and produce little to no side effects. Because of the low THC count, users don't typically experience the "high" associated with traditional marijuana. Such treatment comes without the unpleasant side effects associated with lot of traditional FDA-approved pharmaceuticals.

CONCLUSION

Adoption of this legislation will allow more patients in Connecticut access to safe, effective treatment for their medical conditions and position the state to contribute to the growing body of scientific and medical research on the palliative benefits of marijuana.

We urge the Committee to approve S.B. No. 1064, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA.