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Statement of Tom Schultz and the Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council  
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Senate Bill 5  
March 28, 2016

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Davis, and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

My name is Tom Schultz. I am a longtime Connecticut resident and businessman. For the past two years I have been affiliated with Connecticut Pharmaceutical Solutions, a licensed medical marijuana producer. I also serve as president of the Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council and on their behalf would like to offer brief comments on Senate Bill 5, *An Act Establishing a Surcharge on the Manufacture and Distribution of Opioids and Funding for Opioid Abuse Prevention and Treatment*.

Our organization is comprised of the four licensed producers of medical marijuana in the State of Connecticut.

You considered the issue of an opioid surcharge last year in Senate Bill 1130. That legislation contained a specific exemption from a surcharge for the medical marijuana program. Similar language, however, is not in Senate Bill 5—which leads us to believe medical marijuana could be included in this surcharge.

CMCC would ask that if you move this bill forward that you add the exemption back in. The language needed is underlined: "Controlled substance" means a controlled substance, as defined in section 21a-240 of the general statutes, in schedule II, or III, IV or V that is also an opioid, *except that controlled substance does not include marijuana prescribed for palliative use pursuant to chapter 420f of the general statutes.* This could be inserted at the end of the sentence in subsection (2) of Section 1.

Applying a 6.35 percent surcharge to medical marijuana will simply add cost to a product that patients, with severe debilitating diseases such as cancer, need. Many are in constant and severe pain; many are low-income, and the program contains strict limits as to the amount of medical marijuana that can be purchased each month. Please keep in mind each patient has already paid \$100 to enter the program and probably paid for a medical appointment to be certified eligible. Why make their lives more difficult?

We are worried that the surcharge could exacerbate the price differential between the pharmaceutical grade medical marijuana that is available through the program versus what is available on the street. This could encourage diversion or the use of unsafe or contaminated marijuana.

We believe the medical marijuana can play a role in assisting individuals to reduce their use of controlled substances like Percocet. More and more scientific literature is showing medical marijuana can be effective in reducing chronic and debilitating pain without the addictive effects of prescription drugs.

For these reasons, we would ask that you exclude the medical marijuana program from any contemplated surcharge. The program is still relatively new. The number of certified patients is still relatively small. We do not believe there is significant revenue to be gained here at this point in time.

Please let us know if you would like more information on this issue. Our administrator and government relations consultant, Linda Kowalski, will be happy to discuss this matter with you further. Thank you.