

Hello and Thank You to Commissioner Seagull and the Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Erin Doolittle. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Private Practice at 1738 Ellington Road, South Windsor. I also serve as the mental health clinician at Canna Care Docs in Hartford. Our services certify patients for the CT MMP and my role is to diagnose PTSD on site and provide recommendations for potential therapeutic supports. I am a lifelong resident of the state of CT and I have been in the education and mental health fields for over twenty years. I am speaking today in support of Senate Bill 487, An Act Concerning the Legalization, Taxation, and Regulation of the Retail Sale and Recreational Use of Marijuana and Concerning the Production and Regulation of Hemp.

On February 18 of this year I attended the Yale School of Management Conference: The Business of Legal Cannabis. What I learned there was frankly, shocking. Our keynote speaker was Mr. Brendan Kennedy, CEO of Privateer Holdings, owner of the multi-million dollar companies Leafly, Tilray, and LANDSEYE. Backed by giants of industry such as Unilever and PepsiCo, Mr. Kennedy shared with us photos of the actual marijuana products being mass-produced and sold in other countries by his companies. His thesis: "Cannabis is a mainstream product consumed by mainstream people. The end of prohibition is inevitable. Brands will shape the future of the industry." Examples of brands already available for sale to the public include Marley Natural, The Goodship Company (edibles), IRISA Wellness, and Grail, a "luxury product."

The future is coming fast and if there's one thing I am most proud of my home state for, it is our ability to embrace change with integrity and intelligence. That's what makes us a big leader for such a small state. Our medical marijuana program is top notch. I'm proud of our elected officials who are standing up and fighting every day for CT to maintain its status as a leader in everything from sanctuary cities, to common sense gun control, to healthcare, and LGBTQ rights. At this point we have to opportunity to show the world, yet again, what a leader looks like. We have to be brave and stand up for what's right and best for our communities and our citizens. I care about the wellbeing of my neighbors, the research and numbers show that 71% of residents approve the legalization of cannabis.

I would like to share the parts of a talk I heard at the Yale Business of Legal Cannabis Conference. I can't take credit for the information, but the speaker is a woman named Tahira Rahmatullah, she is the managing director of Hyper Ventures and a veteran in the cannabis industry. She shed light on the history of cannabis that I think is relevant and important to take into consideration today and going forward.

Excerpted and edited for use by Erin Doolittle

Original work by Tahira Rahmatullah,

...The deep history of cannabis and how it came to be illegal in the US. In particular, how did it go from being a very normal resource to something that was very counterculture, completely outlawed, and something that has fueled this massive industry globally?

Let's go back 10,000 years where it was widely recognized as one of the most useful plants on the planet. Humans have been using it for centuries to make clothes, paper, pottery, but the first direct reference to cannabis as something that was psychoactive or a medicinal product was around 2700 BC. There was a Chinese emperor whose focus was on the kind of healing powers of cannabis and he prescribed it to people for malaria, rheumatism, and oddly enough, poor memory.

I don't know if that's actually true but that's what he used. Cannabis was actually introduced into America by the Spanish in 1545 where it became a major commercial force and was grown alongside tobacco. Hemp production was encouraged by the US government to manufacture rope and sails and clothing. The Virginia assembly even passed legislation that required every farmer to grow hemp. And hemp was even allowed to be exchanged as legal tender in several states.

Farmers mostly grew hemp instead of cannabis and by 1890 it had actually become the major cash crop in the United States. Around 1910 the Mexican Revolution was starting to boil over and many Mexicans immigrated to the US to avoid a lot of that conflict. Mexican immigrants had their own uses for cannabis and they referred to it as marijuana. Not only did they use it for medicinal purposes but they smoked it recreationally, which was actually a new concept for white Americans. At that time, during the Great Depression, massive unemployment increased public resentment and fear of Mexican immigrants that escalated public and governmental concern about the problem of marijuana. Which was now a new term that was directly affiliated to these Mexican immigrants.

This instigated a flurry of research which linked the use of cannabis with violence, crime, and other socially deviant behaviors that were very much committed by, what were deemed at that time, to be racially inferior and underclass communities.

The war against marijuana arguably began in 1930 when a new division in the Treasury Department was established. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics eventually became the DEA, and Harry Anslinger was named the director. Now you'll hear this name a lot and sometimes people boo it, as they should. Anslinger realized that opiates and cocaine would probably not be enough to build his new agency so he turned towards marijuana. He worked relentlessly to make it illegal on the federal level.

Some anti marijuana quotes from Anslinger's agency read: "The primary reason to outlaw marijuana is its effect on the degenerate races. Marijuana is an addictive drug which produces in its users insanity, criminality, and death.

Marijuana leads to pacifism and communist brainwashing."

And lastly, "Marijuana is the most violence causing drug in the history of mankind."

Now all of these are outrageous claims I think we all agree with that. I didn't even read you the most ridiculous ones because they're actually too racist for me to read out loud. But Anslinger's strategy worked. He also had additional help from William Randolph Hearst who was an owner of a large chain of newspapers. Hearst had a lot of reasons to join Anslinger's cause. He supposedly hated minorities and he used his chain of newspapers to aggravate racial tensions

whenever possible. He had invested heavily in the timber industry to support his new paper chain and didn't want to see the development of hemp paper in competition with his paper.

He also lost 800,000 acres of timber land during the Mexican Revolution so he kind of had an axe to grind. Telling lies about Mexicans and the devil marijuana weed causing violence sold newspapers. Anslinger and Hearst were then supported by the head of the DuPont chemical company and a few other large pharmaceutical corporations; all of whom had a financial interest in defeating hemp to promote their own products.

For example, DuPont began selling rayon which was the first man-made fiber in 1924 and invented nylon a synthetic competitor to hemp in 1935. One reason pharmaceutical companies dislike cannabis is because people could grow it themselves. This was competition for them.

US economic and political power houses teamed up to form the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937. The Act placed a tax on the sale of cannabis and testified to the many harmful effects of it. During the hearings before Congress, the committee chairman stated: "*High school boys and girls buy the destructive weed without knowledge of its capacity of harm... This is a national problem and it must have national attention. The fatal marijuana cigarette must be recognized as a deadly drug and American children must be protected against it.*" So with that, in 1937, the Act effectively prohibited cannabis at the federal level although medical use was permitted. New fees and regulatory requirements readily curtailed the use of it.

Then, over the next few decades, a lot happened around cannabis. Some good, some very bad.

In 1944 the New York Academy of Medicine issued a very extensively researched report declaring that: "*Contrary to earlier research and popular belief, use of cannabis did not induce violence, insanity, or sex crimes. Nor lead to addiction or other drug use.*" However from 1951 to '56 federal laws were actually enacted which set mandatory sentences for drug related offenses, including cannabis. A first offense cannabis possession carried a minimum sentence of 2 to 10 years in prison with a fine of up to \$20,000.

\$20,000 in 1951 is about \$200,000 in today's dollar so that's a hefty fine in addition to jail time. In the 1960's, changing political and cultural climate was reflected in more lenient attitudes towards cannabis. Usage became widespread in the white upper-middle classes. *Reports commissioned by presidents Kennedy and Johnson found that cannabis use did not induce violence or lead to heavier drugs.* In 1967, President Johnson's Commission on law enforcement and administration of justice stated, "The Marijuana Tax Act raises an insignificant amount of revenue and exposes an insignificant number of marijuana transactions to public view. Since only a handful of people are registered under the Act, it has become in effect solely a criminal law imposing sanctions upon persons who sell, acquire, or possess marijuana."

As a result of that, part of the Act was actually ruled unconstitutional. In response Congress then passed the Controlled Substances Act as part of the comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, which then repealed the 1937 Act. Congress also repealed most of the mandatory penalties for drug related offenses. It was widely acknowledged that the mandatory minimum sentence of the 1950s had really done nothing to eliminate the drug culture that

embraced cannabis throughout the 60s. It also acknowledged that minimum sentences were often excessively harsh.

However, when Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act, the war against cannabis actually intensified. *The bipartisan Shafer Commission, appointed by President Nixon at the direction of Congress, considered laws regarding cannabis and determined that personal use of cannabis should be decriminalized.*

Nixon, however, rejected the recommendation.

The Controlled Substance Act created five schedules which are classifications...Cannabis is considered a Schedule one narcotic which means it's one of the substances with the highest potential abuse and no accepted medical use. Obviously this goes against everything that everyone knows. In contrast cocaine, meth, are schedule two drugs. Meaning they're considered less dangerous and definitely not as dangerous as cocaine. And Xanax and Valium are schedule four drugs, defined as drugs with very low potential for abuse and a low risk of dependence.

Now I'm going to let you guys think about that for a second. Cocaine, meth, and Valium still today are considered less harmful than cannabis according to our government. I mean, you know it's crazy that that is still the the environment that we live in. When we all, I think, inherently know that is not true.

The 1980s brought the war on drugs and the zero tolerance climate of the Reagan and Bush years which resulted in the passage of much stricter laws, mandatory minimum sentencing for cannabis possession, and heightened vigilance against smuggling at the southern borders.

President Reagan signed the anti-drug Abuse Act in 1986 instituting mandatory sentences for drug related crimes. Possession of a hundred cannabis plants received the same penalty as possession of a hundred grams of heroin. A later amendment to the anti-drug Abuse Act established a three strikes, you're out policy requiring life sentences for repeat drug offenders, and providing for the death penalty for drug kingpins.

However, as all these terrible things were happening at the federal level, states were also starting to make their own decisions starting in the 1970's. Eleven states decriminalized cannabis and many others reduced their penalties. Oregon was actually the first state to decriminalize cannabis and reduced the penalty for up to one ounce to a \$100 fine. Finally, in 1996 California voters passed prop 215 which allowed medical use of cannabis for patients with AIDS, cancer, and other serious and painful diseases. This law clearly stood in tension with federal laws prohibiting possession of cannabis, but other states like Alaska, Oregon, and Washington eventually followed suit. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Because as we already know, thirty states plus DC have legalized medical cannabis. Nine states have legalized recreational adult use in the US, and we know that many many more are on the horizon.

So what does all this mean now for the future? Once an industry no one wanted to touch for fear of legal repercussions and reputational risk, now the industry has been flooded with new businesses, business ideas, and wealthy investors.

If you think about it, cannabis is a confluence of so many different social forces. There's history, public health, medical research, economic opportunity, innovation, the list goes on and on. It's an industry that crosses gender barriers and socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, and political views. In my opinion, there are few if any other industries that really bring together such a diverse group of people and ideas. This onslaught of legalization and policy change has led to the need for a variety of businesses. Of course cultivation is a big part of cannabis, but businesses that aid those cultivations infuse product manufacturers.

Dispensaries, referred to as ancillary businesses, are just as important and represent the largest and broadest sector of the cannabis industry. Ancillary businesses can be anything from extraction technology to industry consulting with literally everything in between. And all these businesses never actually touch cannabis. The need for these business has snowballed in the last few years because cannabis needs the same ecosystem as every other industry, but because it is illegal a lot of companies that operate in other industries won't touch cannabis. So cannabis has had to develop all these industries itself. Their brands, their distributors, their testing. There are tech platforms, HR, Payroll, packaging, media. All that's been built to be cannabis specific.

We've learned today that there used to be primarily just flower. But on the whole, less people are smoking flower than other products in that group. Although it's still the largest group that's out there, other groups are starting to grow quite wildly. I mean everyone now is vaping or drinking or dabbing or applying an ointment or taking a pill because cannabis exists in all of these forms. Now there are products for athletes or soccer moms. For ageing communities. There are even products for your pets. And that's just in cannabis. There are also hemp and CBD only products. Most of this didn't even exist a few years ago. At least not at the scale that we're seeing it now.

Once thought to be either medical or recreational, cannabis is also part of the growing wellness industry. Adults of all ages are experiencing the benefits of cannabis and the numbers are growing. Many adults are actually turning to cannabis as a cleaner, healthier substitute for smoking or drinking. Consumers are also trying CBD as a natural non-pharmaceutical form of relief.

Less prominent now are the tie-dye bong or dancing bears that I think we all associate with the industry at times. Instead, we see an array of alluring products and amazing design. Of course, for all the products that are good products out there, there are also some pretty bad ones. And as industry matures and legality changes, a lot of companies won't survive. But that's normal. This is a new industry and things change every single day.

There's still also white space for certain types of companies to develop or to do better what another company is already doing. As we look at demographics, we see that women have always enjoyed the benefits of cannabis. But the vast majority of cannabis buyers have traditionally been men. Improved access and safety, combined with an expanding menu of brands and products specifically for women, has enabled women today to easily get the products that they want with ease.

A San Francisco-based tech company that provides delivery service technology to dispensaries, tracks cannabis use across its markets. In 2016 the number of women using (the service) went up 32%. The company also reports that the modern marijuana consumer spends more on cannabis