

Senate Bill 487: AN ACT CONCERNIN LEGALIZATION, TAXATION AND REGULATION OF THE RETAIL SALE AND RECREATIONAL USE OF MARIJUANA AND CONCERNING THE PRODUCTION AND REGULATION OF HEMP

Testimony from Brian Essenter RPh

It is my opinion that the prohibition against cannabis needs to end! It has been over 70 years now and this is absolutely too long. Cannabis has been used for CENTURIES for its healative properties such as relieving pain and inflammation, decreasing seizures, anxiety and panic attacks, relieving muscle spasms, nausea, vomiting, and even its anti-tumor/anti-cancer properties. To see if these things are true, you are welcome to speak with any of the 25,000 plus patients in Connecticut's Medical Marijuana program.

We already have a great Medical Marijuana program that is doing quite well in the state. The program is one of the most respected in the country. If we use this base to expand from, we can make it the safe and great for everyone!

One of Connecticut's (and the nations) most pressing issues is the opioid crisis! The amount of deaths that are occurring because of the opioid crisis only part of the problem. There is also the financial burden it is placing on our healthcare system, our jails, our police, firefighters, and EMS workers!

There are quite a few studies out there that have shown in the states with medical and recreational marijuana programs their opiate overdose deaths have decreased by upwards of 30% within the first 5 years of the program. If we just consider what that decrease in costs could do to help our failing healthcare system. There are also studies that are showing patients who are using cannabis are decreasing their prescription medication use. Another benefit to our rising healthcare costs!

Another LARGE issue in the state of Connecticut is its current fiscal situation. I think we can all agree it is not looking good! Well, here is a way to allow us to bring in more revenue from a BRAND NEW REVENUE STREAM! I am not sure just how many options we have to create NEW revenue streams, let alone to bring in such large amounts of revenue by doing so! Will we have the same windfall that came to Colorado and the "Green Rush" out west? No! BUT, we can also stop \$ from running across the borders to MA as soon as they go live in just a couple of months. RI is about to start taking CT Medical Marijuana Cards, where prices are cheaper. This is at or near our borders where we have the fewest dispensaries in CT. If we want to compete and make sure that even more \$ is not disappearing across our borders, we need to act sooner rather than later.

Many of the opponents of this will ask "*what will happen to our streets with everyone driving around stoned all the time?*" I would say that we're safer than we are if everyone is on all of the opiates that that are currently being prescribed. An additional aspect of this argument is that there is no "breathalyzer" type test. HOWEVER, We do not have "breathalyzer" type test to see if some one is "drugged driving" while under the influence of prescription medications that can impair their ability to operate a car. (I would even use the example of Tiger Woods and his "misuse of a couple of his medications together."). I also believe that police officers are trained professionals. They have been

trained what to look for in someone who is unable to operate a car. I believe they would also agree that field sobriety tests are a decent indicator as to how impaired a driver is.

I have read that other states that are asking for volunteers. These volunteers are asked to use marijuana with the officers present. Then they are asked to perform simulated driving and other typical motor ability tasks. This is very informative for the officers and I am sure they would have no shortage of volunteers to help them out. There are also plenty of educated medical professionals like myself who are more than happy to help educate any law enforcement official, state official, or anyone interested to understand the effects and side effects of marijuana.

Some other issues and responses

Grow rights: Not everyone can grow tomato's, what makes them think they will be able to grow marijuana which needs MUCH more care and attention. Grocery stores exist for this reason. Bars and liquor stores exist and thrive even though brewing your own beer and liquor are popular things to do now. Let's allow the patients who need and rely on certain strains that might be difficult to find at times in the dispensaries, but help them with their specific ailments.

Production and Regulation of Hemp: Our farmers have taken enough of a hit. It is time they're allowed to grow a product that can benefit everyone as a textile! Nothing else needs to be said about that.

Final Thought:

Opiates are being prescribed like candy by our doctors! Our state is BROKE! We are losing big company after big company and the people are leaving right behind. The people of our STATE and Country have said they overwhelmingly approve of this! Why not allow a new revenue stream to thrive and grow right here in CT?! Why not let our citizens and patients have a choice to use something that is not nearly as addicting and is a more natural alternative?! Why not try to take some of this financial burden off of the citizens of this state!?

I am a former Dispensary Manager for over 2 years in CT. I am a pharmacist. And I am here to help in any way I can so please feel free to contact me for anything I can do to help the process!

Thank you very much for your time!

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