

CRITICAL POLICY DECISIONS MUST BE GROUNDED IN THE TRUTH.

TO: MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. # 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

My name is William Huhn, 465 Clapboard Hill Road, Guilford, Ct. 06437. I am the spokesman for CT Smart Approaches to Marijuana, a statewide coalition opposed to legalization of retail MJ. I am also a member of Guilford DAY, a local coalition committed to prevention of teen abuse of alcohol and drugs in Guilford. This is testimony in opposition to SB # 487.

Last year in discussing the impact of marijuana on youth, a legislator told me: "One side says it's harmless, the other side says it damages the brain. The two sides neutralize each other. I don't believe either side." That attitude is dead wrong and a cop out. When there is conflict, there will always be at least two stories. It generally is not too difficult to figure out which is more truthful. In connection with the legalization issue, there are many conflicts between the pro and con. The policy choice has the potential to worsen the curse of drug abuse and addiction in our state. This is sufficiently important to Connecticut's kids that you should check conflicting claims, and determine which are correct and which are not.

There are a number of tools available to you in finding the truth. For example, is the evidence peer-reviewed research from a scientific journal, a finding by an unbiased government agency, a newspaper account quoting someone seeking to profit from your decision, or a bare assertion with nothing to back it up? If claims are footnoted, check a sample of the original sources to see if they have been accurately cited.

Another tool is to logically evaluate the conflicting claims. Which claims make sense, and which aren't logical? A third tool is to ask who profits? Follow the money. Is someone being paid for the testimony or is there a financial reason to play games with the truth?

The following are important aspects of the legalization issue where the evidence should be evaluated and the truth determined:

Mass Incarceration or Not: This is an excellent opportunity for members of the Judiciary Committee to determine the truth of conflicting claims. Proponents of legalization claim that Connecticut's marijuana laws have resulted in mass incarceration of minority youth for possession of small quantities of MJ. Opponents of legalization claim that this problem was solved in 2010 when Connecticut decriminalized possession of small quantities of MJ, and they cite a March 2015 OPM study of the offenses for which people in Connecticut are incarcerated.

If you check the OPM study you can quickly determine the truth. The OPM study shows that only **seventeen people** were incarcerated for possession of less than four oz. of MJ or controlled substances, and an additional **thirty two** for possession of hallucinogens or 4+ oz. of MJ. A total

of **16,095** people were incarcerated as of that date. See pages 2 and 3 of the OPM CJPPD home page for the March 2015 report: [CT.gov total population by controlling offense](#).

Furthermore, the total minorities incarcerated for possession of MJ is surely less than a total of forty-nine. There are no OPM statistics breaking out minority status for MJ offenses, but some of the **forty-nine** would have been white. Some of the forty-nine would have been incarcerated for possession of hallucinogens or other controlled substances, and some of those incarcerated for possession of MJ would have plea-bargained from more serious charges. Fortunately people of color are not victims of mass incarceration for possession of MJ.

The 2015 OPM report shows that 146 people were incarcerated for sale of controlled substances, but it is unlikely that legalization of MJ would decrease those numbers. Dealers will continue to sell black market MJ illegally at a lower price than legal retail MJ subject to a 20+% tax. It will be necessary to rigorously prosecute dealers who sell in the black market in order to protect the legal retail market (and tax revenues) from the cheaper illegal competition.

Does legalization lead to increased adolescent use of MJ or not? The opponents of legalization assert that it leads to increased MJ use by teens. The proponents assert that it does not.

If you wish to understand the impact of legalization on Colorado, review the 168 page federal study, THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA COLORADO: THE IMPACT VOLUME 5 October 2017

<http://www.rmhidta.org/html/FINAL%202017%20Legalization%20of%20Marijuana%20in%20Colorado%20The%20Impact.pdf>

This is an excellent document with extensive information on the various impacts on MJ. The proponents of legalization realize that the federal study is devastating to their position, and are unrelenting in their attacks on it. It is a simple matter to determine the truth. Click on the link to the study, and see for yourself. The report is extensively footnoted. On a random basis, check the sources to see if they support the conclusions of the impact study.

Regarding increased youth use in Colorado, this study reviews national survey data showing significant increases in youth marijuana use in Colorado from 2006 when the state first legalized medical marijuana, until the present time. Colorado now has the highest teen use of MJ of any state. (Use in the 30 days prior to the survey.) Marijuana use for Colorado youth ages 12 to 17 years old increased from 7.6% in 2006 to 11.17 % in 2015 .

The proponents of legalization claim there has been no increase in teen use since MJ was legalized This argument is based on a state survey that showed a 7.6% increase from 2013 to 2015, but due to low student participation rates in the survey, the increase was not statistically significant and thus led to claims of “No increase in teen pot use.” In fact the increase would have been between 0% to 15%.

To see for yourself, click on the impact study and review pages 33 - 40

The question of whether legalization of MJ will increase teen use in Connecticut is critically important. **A fundamental duty of the General Assembly is to protect CT kids. If legalization means more teen use, Connecticut should turn its back on legalization. The last thing our state needs is more drug use by kids, and more addiction.**

Although the impact study provides relevant statistical information, it is not necessary to sort out the statistics in Colorado to understand what will happen in Connecticut. It is common sense to know that legalization will increase teen use. The MJ corporations are aiming this at kids. They characterize MJ use as “**recreational**”. Kids will assume that the legislature would not legalize MJ unless it is safe. And increased supplies and access definitely will lead to increased use by all ages, including kids. And then there is all the media attention and the advertising, which we all know works. And the candy, and the brownies, and the packaging for kids. Big money is at stake and you all must know that the corporations behind this are willing to lie to you when they assert that teen MJ use will not increase following legalization.

Does MJ pose serious health risks or is it harmless? The proponents of legalization claim that MJ is safe and harmless. They scoff at “reefer madness”. They characterize MJ as “recreational”. They recount stories of people helped by MJ use. They include no health warnings on their products. They do not cite peer reviewed scientific studies published in scientific journals.

The opponents of legalization claim there is extensive research showing considerable neurological risks for chronic users. And the health risks are higher for teens than for adults, due to the impact on the developing brain.

It is dead easy for you to determine which claims are accurate, by checking some of the research. There is a ton of research on the health risks. Review the last twenty pages of THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA COLORADO: THE IMPACT VOLUME 5 October 2017 <http://www.rmhidta.org/html/FINAL%202017%20Legalization%20of%20Marijuana%20in%20Colorado%20The%20Impact.pdf>

This section of the study annotates hundreds of research studies and reports. This is an invaluable resource for you to use in making this critically important policy decision for Connecticut’s kids.

Dr. Nora Volkow, the Director of NIDA, a Division of NIH, states on her webpage: “The research studies have shown that exposure to cannabinoids during adolescent development can cause long-lasting changes in the brain’s reward system as well as the hippocampus, a brain area critical for learning and memory. The message inherent in these and in multiple supporting studies is clear. Regular marijuana use in adolescence is part of a cluster of behaviors that can produce enduring detrimental effects and alter the trajectory of a young person’s life- thwarting his or her potential.” See <https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/directors-page/messages-director/2012/09/marijuanas-lasting-effects-brain>

Will there be a tax windfall for Connecticut or not? The proponents claim there will, the opponents claim there will not. The proponents cite the tax revenue that will come from sales of retail MJ, but ignore the costs that will be imposed on the state, not to speak of the costs to the private sector.

The fiscal note last year projected certain increased bureaucratic costs for the state – writing regulations, issuing licenses, tax collections, but made no attempt to determine the state’s full costs from legalization. It would be foolish to stampede into legalization of MJ for tax revenues, without evaluating governmental costs such as Medicaid costs to the state via car accidents, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, additional detox and rehab for addicts, mental health costs, welfare and medical costs for those who suffer schizophrenia, psychosis, or other mental health problems, homelessness, and expenses associated with increased student suspensions and expulsions from school. It will be possible to compute precise costs, but it is possible to develop reasonable estimates. Furthermore, common sense should tell you that the costs will wipe out the tax revenues.

In addition to direct governmental costs of MJ legalization, there will be huge costs in non-governmental sectors. You should study and understand the potential costs associated with automobile fatalities caused by MJ DUID, hospitalization costs for fractured skulls, broken bones, massive burns, and property costs. Other costs to evaluate include those associated with MJ addiction, and resulting demotivation, mental illness, unemployment, and homelessness, as well as educational and workplace costs. Your study of legalization should make best estimates of the costs of long term health effects.

It would not be difficult to estimate such costs. CT SAM requested the national SAM organization to undertake such a study. The SAM report has been e-mailed to all legislators, and it can be found online at <https://learnaboutsam.org/toolkit-2/> ***Projected Costs of Marijuana Legalization in CT*** is a good example of how to quantify such costs, and indicates that the costs will far outweigh tax revenues. This evaluation may not be perfect, but it shows that it is possible to roughly quantify the total costs of legalization.

And finally, bring common sense into play. Before assuming that there will be a revenue windfall from legalization, consider the governmental and non-governmental costs of alcohol and cigarettes. It is absolutely clear that costs for cigarettes and alcohol far outweigh the tax revenues. What does that tell you about the so called tax windfall from MJ legalization?

Hopefully the members of the Judiciary Committee are willing to consider the dark side of marijuana. You are faced with a critically important policy decision. In view of the addiction problems of our society, the last thing Connecticut needs is more substance abuse and more addiction. The experience of other states amply demonstrates that legalization will lead to more use of MJ, despite any state regulation.

Respectfully submitted,

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