

Testimony regarding SB487: an act concerning the legalization, taxation and regulation of the retail sale and recreational use of marijuana & Concerning the production and regulation of hemp

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am here in support of legalization of cannabis in Connecticut, and to give my recommendations for judiciary considerations as part of the newly legalized market.

There are a few segments of the population I would ask the committee to give extra consideration towards when deciding the structure of newly written laws.

The first consideration I ask you to make, is towards those state residents that have been disproportionately affected by cannabis arrests.

The state of Connecticut has prosecuted tens of thousands of people for growing or possessing cannabis, and will continue to do so in certain instances until the legalization law is passed with caveats.

I am strongly recommending creating language that expunges all records from persons relating to any previous cannabis state law violation. This is a crucial piece that will help ensure fairness to disproportionately affected individuals.

Persons of color, residents of urban areas, growers and users of natural medicine, citizens young and old alike should not be forced to carry the weight of convictions now, but especially once the state legalizes cannabis. Connecticut has a wonderful opportunity to show how progressive it can be in creating fairness in the structure of these laws, and I want to ensure that special consideration is given to those who have been disproportionately affected by previous marijuana laws in the state.

I also ask that special consideration be given to creating fairness and equity in the legalized cannabis market for certain individuals. I believe that persons of color, residents of urban and/or poverty-stricken areas, those with previous arrests or convictions for cannabis offenses, veterans, minorities, women, and those with disabilities be granted lower barriers to entry for entrepreneurship in the legal cannabis market.

Thousands of businesses will be started by enterprising residents, provided those who are disproportionately affected have an advantage to join and drive revenue in the market. This can be accomplished by creating a sliding scale or reduced application and licensing fees, creating tax or revenue incentive based considerations, allowing those groups priority licensing procedures, or even providing state level grants and funding to those individuals for entrepreneurship will be crucial in Connecticut being seen as progressive and fair to all of its residents.

Another consideration I ask the committee to undertake would be a provision or incentive for employers to eliminate pre-employment drug testing for cannabis. To be clear, I am not advocating eliminating drug testing for workplace accidents or other serious circumstances that may necessitate that level of information. I am only advocating for the state to be proactive in helping to dispel the myth that individuals are not worthy of employment if they test positive for cannabis during a pre-employment screen.

It is the belief of many activists, myself included, that consuming cannabis during personal off time should be treated as normally as someone consuming alcohol, cigarettes, or sugar in their own household. I ask the committee to take special consideration in how we can include recreational and medicinal cannabis users in the conversation, and dispel the myths surrounding them on a large scale.

Regarding hemp production in the state of Connecticut, I believe it should be absolutely incentivized for farmers. Many have speculated that hemp will be the fastest growing segment of the agricultural crop market within the next 15 years. It is an extremely versatile plant, with its' fibers and extracts being used to make gasoline, mulch, batteries, cosmetics, "plastic like" products, foods, fibers, paper, and even paint. This would be an environmentally friendly and eco conscious natural product we have the resources to grow, and grow in quality and quantity. It is my recommendation that Connecticut be at the forefront in allowing an abundant hemp growing market, and approve many new hemp based business licenses.

In short, I believe legalization of Cannabis will be tremendously beneficial for the state of Connecticut and its citizens. It is imperative however, that we create a "red tape free", inclusive and robust market, free of many of the constraints other legalized states are bound by. I ask each of you to ask yourself three questions while voting for, and creating rules for legalizing cannabis in the state of Connecticut.

- Is this going to help the state and its citizens as a whole
- Is this fairly set up, straightforward and approachable at every level to every citizen through regulations
- Have we done enough to be progressive and improve upon where other states have fallen short?

Thank you for your time and consideration this afternoon. I appreciate all consideration you give to legalizing cannabis in Connecticut.

*Catherine R, Norwalk, CT, 06851*