

Testimony of Jason Ortiz  
Vice President of The Minority Cannabis Business Association in support of  
***Raised Bill No. SB487 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF  
THE RETAIL SALE OF MARIJUANA.***

Good afternoon, Chairs and members of the committee. My name is Jason Ortiz, and I am the Vice President of the Minority Cannabis Business Association, a national trade association dedicated to creating equal access and economic empowerment for cannabis businesses, their consumers, and the communities most affected by the war on drugs. I am CT born and raised, graduated from CT Public schools (Norwich Free Academy 2002, UConn 2012) and have worked on criminal justice issues for many years. I am also a Hartford Resident and a Father. And in all of those roles I'm very proud to give my wholehearted support for **SB487**.

Cannabis regulation presents an incredible opportunity that the vast majority of CT supports. Rarely do we see any issue with such widespread support from Republicans, Democrats and Independents. A recent quinnipiac poll puts Marijuana Legalization as more popular than both political parties, our governor and certainly our president. It's clear where the public stands on this issue, and it's past time for our policy to reflect that and finally tax and regulate cannabis.

Public opinion supports regulation, and so does the data. Every state that has regulated cannabis has seen tremendous economic development, with the jobs and tax revenues to back it up. Take Oregon(3.9Million), that has a relatively similar population to CT(3.4 million). According to the Oregon Cannabis Jobs report, legalization created over 2000 new jobs and over \$40 million dollars in new wages in the first year of legalization alone. Denver has seen record tourism with over 10% of tourists over 25 coming specifically for legal cannabis. And not one hour to the north of us, Massachusetts is set to begin opening what will eventually be a one Billion Dollar industry in only a few months. Are we really in such a great financial position as a state that we can give up on that for Connecticut?

Despite that level of economic opportunity, there are too few people of color in the cannabis industry. MCBA exists to correct that, through the implementation of sound public policy at the outset of a new regulatory structure. MCBA believes that high costs of entry, over-regulation, and information gaps hinder people of color from entering the industry as owners, employees, and patients & consumers. This doesn't have to be the case for Connecticut though, as we are creating this industry through the legislative process, which allows us to find the best solution to accomplish our diverse needs.

We believe that the cannabis industry is stronger when it is diverse in it's owners, employees and consumers. For guidance on how to do this, we have drafted a 27-page model bill which addresses all aspects of a state-level adult-use marijuana bill, recognizing the scope of impact of the war on drugs and creating a pathway for economic empowerment and community reinvestment. The bill is available for download at <http://minoritycannabis.org/model-bill.html> .

I am attaching a Vice News Article that discusses our bill, and it's significance in depth. "Other key policy proposals in the model legislation include much stronger protections than anything currently on the books for employees, students, parents, renters, loan applicants , and people living in homeless shelters and public housing. As is currently the case in Oregon, the legislation would allow people to get their criminal records expunged for any pot-related offenses that would no longer be considered illegal."

To draft this bill MCBA convened a diverse group of business owners, policy experts and activists from across the U.S. to draft a blueprint for creating a more diverse, just and equitable cannabis industry. The result of those discussions is a model bill that can serve as a guide for elected officials, advocates and entrepreneurs interested in shaping a new industry in a way that allows the communities who have been most impacted by the war on drugs to take steps towards prospering in the new legal cannabis industry.

In closing I support **SB487** and encourage all members of the Legislature to do the right thing and create much needed economic opportunity for our young people and the people of CT. The minority Cannabis Business Association is here with our wide network of experts and current owners to answer any questions you may have.