

My name is Martha Chavez; I'm a single mother of 3 teens ages 18, 17, 16. We live in Norwalk and I am here to testify against SB1138.

Like many people of my generation, I was indifferent about the wave of marijuana legalization in our state and throughout our country. I was wrong in believing that the marijuana of today is the same marijuana that was around when I was a young adult. Today's marijuana is much more potent; it comes as wax, shatter, oil...; a whole industry exists to produce THC infused candies, drinks, creams, you name it...and they target teens and young adults.

This belief was shattered when my 18 year-old son, a first-semester freshman in college, came home for Christmas break on December 14, 2018, and for 4 days he did not sleep nor eat and was very irritable. I took him to his previous therapist and he disclosed disturbing thoughts to her. He was admitted to the Stamford Hospital ER that same day and into the psychiatric ward the next morning. He remained there for a week. The doctors could not determine a diagnosis. At first, the diagnosis kept fluctuating between bipolar, psychosis, schizophrenia and settled on 'cannabis-induced psychosis'.

I had to act quickly to find where he would continue to get care. Mind you, I have no experience with mental illness, drug addiction, nor the medical industry.

He was admitted into Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan. To my surprise, I had to pay \$38,000 upfront BEFORE he would be admitted for 28 days of continued care. I maxed out 3 credit cards.

After Silver Hill, he moved to a sober house in Westport. He has been living there since January at a cost of \$4,000 a month.

I have had to come up with upwards of \$60,000 since December; I'm aware that the cost will continue to add up and I don't know how I will make ends meet. I have been advised to remove my child from my insurance and to let him go on Husky.

In the meantime, the insurance company has denied coverage for the therapy he badly needs. I realized that I needed to engage someone who knows how the insurance companies work because I was getting the run-around when I called the insurance company myself. I engaged the State of Connecticut Medical Advocate to help me appeal the insurance company's decision. The Advocate has been working on my behalf since mid-February.

The appeal has barely started and it may take months before a decision is reached.

I urge you to consider the emotional and financial costs that legalizing marijuana will create on families and on your budget as more young adults end up on Husky and utilize the State of Connecticut Medical Advocate. I respectfully ask you to vote NO to SB1138. Thank you.

Martha Parizot