

TO: Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

I am Paul Reinhardt, a resident of New Canaan who has lived and worked in Connecticut for 34 years and am now retired. I oppose SB 1138.

I have seen marijuana addiction first hand through my deceased son Evan's journey with substances. In tribute to my beloved Evan--who died of an overdose in 2015--I founded a parent support group in New Canaan over two years ago. This group meets weekly, so parents with loved ones struggling with addiction can find support and hope.

During the last year, I have seen a distinct change in the composition of the parents who attend our meetings. When our group started, most of our parents were addressing opioid and alcohol addictions in their families. These were the primary "drugs of choice". In the last year however, over half the parents discuss how marijuana and THC concentrates are the addictive substances causing dysfunction in their children.

The stories that I hear in our support meetings are similar. Many of the children being discussed have co-occurring issues with anxiety, ADHD and depression. In addition, a family history of addiction may be involved. The child's addiction journey typically involves early use to experiment or self-medicate, with daily, heavy use taking hold.

Addiction can be defined as "continuing to use a substance despite harm". The harm I hear about is not only self-harm to the young person, but the collateral damage to an entire family. Dreams that parents have for their children are postponed if not lost completely.

In Evan's case, marijuana addiction preceded his abuse of opioid pills during his sophomore year in college. After Evan returned home, our family endured a 4-year battle trying to help our son's opioid disorder and it involved significant social, psychological and financial costs.

Today, families of loved ones with marijuana addiction are enduring a similar burden of costs to those that we faced with Evan's opioid addiction. I hear stories of mothers taking out bank loans or maxing out credit cards just to get their children back into treatment.

If our state legalizes the retail purchase of marijuana, more people will consume the product. As demand increases, so will the number of people addicted. In my opinion, to legalize marijuana further is to ask families—especially parents--to endure significant nonfinancial and financial costs.

I urge you as committee members to vote against SB 1138.

Thank you for listening.