

April 29, 2019

Re: Testimony in support of SB 1138, The Community Restoration Bill

Dear Chair Fonfara, Chair Rojas, and members of the Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding:

My name is Kebra Smith I am a lifelong resident of New Haven, CT, I am a Registered Nurse, mother of 4 including a set of 17 year old triplets. I am CEO/Founder of CannaHealth, a Cannabis Focused Health and Wellness Center, the Co-Director of The Connecticut Coalition to Regulate Marijuana, a coalition comprised of individuals and organizations committed to ending the failed policy of marijuana prohibition, and the President of Connecticut United for Reform and Equity (CURE CT) a CT based advocacy group focused on ensuring racial equity is achieved as our state ends its prohibition of Cannabis.

I am here to provide testimony in support of SB 1138

I would first like to thank both Chairs Fonfara and Rojas for proposing and championing SB 1138. For acknowledging the injustices that have existed in communities of color, the racist history of the Prohibition of Cannabis, and The War on Drugs which lead to the targeted and purposeful Mass Incarceration of black and brown people through disparate over policing practices and unequal enforcement of Cannabis related laws. And for recognizing that the aforementioned has left our communities devastated, our families disrupted and has left people who look like me damaged and disenfranchised.

As a person who was a teenager in the 90's, I saw first hand the effect that the War on Drugs had on my community. I remember the first person I knew to die from gun violence personally, I was in 9th grade, his name was Sebastian and I had known him since preschool. We arrived at Hillhouse which was the school we attended and we were informed of his murder in the streets of New Haven, and that grief counselors would be on hand and classes were cancelled, well during the remainder of my highschool education I would not be exaggerating to say that hundreds of my classmates, my peers either were murdered or sent to prison, some of my classmates are just being released after service 20-30 year sentences. But the cancelling of classes stopped and the grief counselors were no longer called and it became a part of our daily lives to hear of murders, of friends receiving decades of prison time and of families being changed forever. I and almost everyone I know suffered these broad community based traumas, as well as many personal traumas that most of us will never even speak of that well directly related to growing up in a war zone. Because of the effect this Failed War on Drugs, but successful War on people, had on my community.

With SB 1138, and the enactment of adult use Cannabis legislation in the State of CT, we have to opportunity, by way of the use of funds from Cannabis Tax Revenue, to right the wrongs of nearly a century of Prohibition. With 100% of the Cannabis Tax revenue going to the most

DISTRESSED communities we can be a part of empowering communities to repair, rebuild themselves, through programs being proposed in this bill that will fund early literacy education and Community Development corporations that will focus on improving the lives of all people from our Communities. Whether or not they want to engage in the Cannabis Industry.

We are bent but not broken, damaged but not destroyed, disenfranchised, but not without hope. Therefore Providing financial literacy, and opportunity, access to resources and services and showing the most distressed cities in our state that is all my community needs to take our rightful place in society