Testimony for submission to the CT Judiciary Committee:

From Councilwoman Wildaliz Bermúdez, Hartford City Council Member for the Working Families Party

Dear Senator Winfield, Rep. Stafstrom and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I write you today in hopes that you will join the majority of Connecticut residents to support bringing an end to the harmful prohibition on Marijuana by passing SB16. Prohibition sends an incredible number of Americans through the criminal justice system, ruining countless lives. The failed policy also provides no public health or public safety regulation leading to violence and unnecessary fatalities year-after-year in Connecticut.

According to the FBI, there have been more than 13 million marijuana arrests in the U.S. since 1995. Eighty-nine percent were for possession. While marijuana consumers who were not convicted have gone on to be president or Supreme Court justice, a criminal conviction can stand in the way of securing a job, getting housing, or receiving a professional license, student loan, food assistance, driver's license, or firearms permit.

Marijuana laws are also disproportionately enforced. According to the ACLU, blacks are more than three times as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than whites, despite similar rates of use – even in Connecticut.

SB 16 will reduce arrests and imprisonment for non-violent cannabis offenses and restore basic rights of citizenship to individuals with non-violent cannabis offenses. The bill will economically promote and ensure the welfare of the communities most impacted by the War on Drugs through community reinvestment, corporate responsibility initiatives, and social programming. The legislation will also facilitate the inclusion and success of minorities in the cannabis industry through equitable access to opportunities and resources.

Finally, this bill will provide regulation to protect public health and safety and a focus on repairing harms done by prohibition. I encourage you to support this measure to bring an end, once and for all, to the harmful prohibition of Marijuana in Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

Wildaliz Bermúdez, Hartford City Council Member for the Working Families Party