Senate Bill No. 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.

Judiciary Committee

March 2, 2020

CCIA Position: Opposed

Connecticut Construction Industries Association, Inc. (CCIA) represents various sectors of the commercial construction industry in the state. Formed over 40 years ago, CCIA is an organization of associations, where various segments of the commercial construction industry work together to advance and promote their shared interests. CCIA members include contractors, subcontractors, material producers, suppliers and affiliated organizations.

CCIA is opposed to Senate Bill No. 16 because the risks associated with permitting the adult use of cannabis, and introducing a substance that can cause unquantifiable impairment in the construction industry, far outweigh any intended benefits of this bill. The adult use of cannabis in Connecticut will undermine the construction industry’s drug testing regimens, which will put everyone working in the industry in an impossible situation. The adult use of cannabis is completely indifferent to the construction industry’s priority of safety.

The adult use of cannabis will have a vast negative impact on the dynamics of the construction workplace. Whether it is the operation of heavy machinery, transporting materials, or performing skilled trade work, safety is the priority. In construction, employers focus on establishing and maintaining a safe and productive workforce. Occupations and classifications are designated as safety sensitive, due to the potential risks associated with performing tasks. If this bill is enacted, everyone, on or near a construction site or in a production facility, will be working at the risk that any person around them may not be able to understand and maintain control of the effects that the use of cannabis will have on their ability to safely perform their tasks.

The construction industry is prevalent with hazardous job functions where individuals and everyone working near them are at risk of serious injury or death — every minute of every day. Any significant risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of an employee or others constitutes a direct threat to everyone on, near, or passing by a jobsite.

Shaping the Future of the Construction Industry
Currently, construction companies have policies in place to address impairment. These policies limit the use of medications and other substances that alter perception to any degree. Zero tolerance policies are in place for many substances. Policies hold steadfast that any impairment due to an intoxicant is unacceptable. Permitting adult use of cannabis, when there is no way to test for or accurately measure the level of impairment, thwarts these protocols.

CCIA recognizes the exemptions for employers in certain situations in this bill. However, not one of those exemptions can guarantee that no employee, whether intentional or not, will walk onto a construction project, unknowingly or knowing, impaired due to the use of cannabis. Nor do those exemptions provide an employer an accurate and reliable means or method to detect or measure the level of impairment under the use of cannabis. Those exceptions do little to counteract the proliferation of availability of cannabis and the ensuing increase of the group of people using cannabis in Connecticut.

By enacting this bill, the same legislature that is holding construction employers responsible to ensure a safe workplace will be compromising every employer’s ability to do so. This will leave the employers responsible for an inherently dangerous and imperceptible situation that they cannot control.

Introducing the effects the use of cannabis to the construction workplace puts everyone on or near the site in jeopardy. People’s lives, safety and wellbeing are of the upmost importance. This is not worth the risk.

For these reasons and more, CCIA opposes Senate Bill No. 16.

Please contact Don Shubert, President of CCIA, at 860-529-6855, or dshubert@ctconstruction.org, if you have any questions or if you need additional information.