My name is Juan Candelaria and I represent the 95th district in Connecticut. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 16, An Act Concerning Adult-Use Cannabis. The cannabis industry is currently flourishing in its underground system. Connecticut is not immune to the growing industry of marijuana across the nation. The prohibition of cannabis has not lessened the sale or use of cannabis products, it has only created a large illegal market that will not cease. Legalizing cannabis would not only boost our economy, but also align us with the neighboring states who are already benefiting from legalizing the adult use of cannabis. Legalizing cannabis puts Connecticut on the forefront for economic prosperity.

As for addressing the concern of public health and safety, this proposal includes detailed measures to protect the public. There will be processes implemented to combat the issues that might surface during the legalization process. Some key provisions include implementing training for our police officers and safety officials to identify those under the influence of drugs. There will be enhanced processes to identify impaired drivers, which will correspondingly keep our roads and drivers safe. Not to mention, there will be a regulated market in place that will provide safe products. This is a huge benefit because the current state of the market does not allow for transparency between the seller and the consumer. There will also be important regulations that prohibit retailers from selling near schools, parks or other locations notably populated by children. Furthermore, there will be an update on the state’s indoor clean air act to limit where cannabis is consumed and to protect children and other individuals from secondhand smoke, keeping our children safe is always a priority, keeping our residents safe is always a priority.

A final point I would like to make, is that there is an overwhelming racial disparity in who takes part in the usage of marijuana and who is arrested for its illegal possession. People of color are disproportionately arrested for possession of marijuana in comparison to white offenders. Connecticut is a state that should thrive on its diversity and its laws should reflect
that. This act will improve the disparity of race among criminal records regarding cannabis. The act has a provision to erase all convictions made prior to October 1st, 2015, for the possession of cannabis in the amount of 4oz or less. It will also allow for all other individuals convicted under the same circumstances, after the date, to petition for erasure. Ultimately, it will improve communities and release productive citizens back into society.

This act will allow communities to foster economic growth, it will improve social freedom, and Connecticut will see many benefits from legalizing the adult use of cannabis.

Sincerely,

Juan Candelaria
State Representative