S.B. No. 16 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS
Lourdes Delgado, Faith & Education Coalition, CT  Director
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Opposition: S.B. No.16 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS.

Co-Chairs Gary A. Winfield, Steven J. Stafstrom and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am Lourdes Delgado, Director of Faith & Education Coalition, for NHCLC CT and a retired Bridgeport educator.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

I oppose S.B. No.16. It will further contribute to widening the Academic Achievement and Opportunity Gaps in our state.

This will affect student growth and development, teacher participation, and family stability.¹ Evidence indicates limited legalization of marijuana has already raised rates of unintended marijuana exposure among young children, and may increase adolescent use. As a public school educator I encountered students using marijuana, alcohol, and cigarettes. I had a ten year old come to school with a cigarette. He told me he bought the “loosey” (individually sold cigarette) at the local store. I have also had to report parents to DCF for exposing their children to “adult” approved and not approved substances. Students who were high on marijuana not only disrupted their education but that of others. Even though recreational marijuana is not legal for adults, it is being distributed to the young. In a recent letter to parents by the Bridgeport Superintendent of Schools he indicated that they have had incidents of increased number of students that are in possession of marijuana laced items that can be potentially very dangerous if consumed. In 2017, Washington state law enforcement documented a total of 424 violations among licensed marijuana businesses. Of these, 288 violations pertained to selling marijuana to minors and 136 violations were for allowing minors access to a restricted area.²

Connecticut has ten teacher shortage areas in 2019-2020³. Although the governor just stated 250 teachers of color will be hired, there has been an attrition of teachers who could make an impact in closing the Achievement gap. I already had an excellent urban teacher tell me that if recreational marijuana is legalized she will leave the profession. Classroom management is challenging enough without marijuana use.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse in a review of 48 relevant studies found marijuana use to be associated with reduced educational attainment (i.e., reduced chances of graduating). A recent analysis using data from three large studies in Australia and New Zealand found that adolescents who used marijuana regularly were significantly less likely than their non-using peers to finish high school or obtain a degree.⁴ The parts of the adolescent brain that develop first are those responsible for physical coordination, emotion and motivation. However, the part of the brain that controls reasoning and impulses, the prefrontal cortex does not fully develop until age 25.⁵ Marijuana use manifests itself in non-productive behaviors:
  * Poorer education outcomes, cognitive impairment and hindrance to overall success.
  * Adolescents using cannabis are four to seven times more likely than adults to develop this disorder Cannabis Use Disorder.
  * A preference for high-excitement and low-effort activities
  * Engaging in risky and impulsive behaviors, including experimenting with drugs and alcohol
* Lowering a person’s IQ by 8 points and interfering with other aspects of functioning and well-being.
* Due to their risk taking they find themselves in vulnerable situations and make bad choices while under the influence, poor planning and judgment (rarely thinking of negative consequences)
* Increased risk of depression and suicide.
* Having difficulty holding back or controlling emotions
* The use, especially frequent use, has been linked to a higher risk of developing schizophrenia or other psychoses (severe mental illnesses) in people who are predisposed to these illnesses and causing suicide in young adulthood.  

Anchoragae, school suspensions for marijuana use and possession increased more than 141% from 2015 (when legalization was implemented) to 2017 (Wohlforth, 2018).  

S.B. 16 will not benefit our children, youth, nor adults, particularly in our poorer communities. Marijuana is a gateway drug. A 2012 Yale University Study found that, among both men and women, those who had used marijuana were 2.5 times more likely than those their age who abstained to later dabble in prescription drugs.  

A Health News Report sites, "More Kids Are Entering Foster Care Because Of Parental Drug Use". As overdose deaths rise, more children are growing up without parents. "Father absence in the African American communities. across America, has hit those communities with the force of 100 hurricane Katrinas," said Phillip Jackson, executive director of the Chicago-based Black Star Project, which helps children in mainly minority schools. Allegheny County Dept. of Human Services shows that about 50% of residents who died last year from opioid-involved overdoes were parents. Sadly, substance abuse causes too many to become imprisoned parents. When parents are not accessible, the children and youth suffer and the communities suffer.  

We expect our leaders to make decisions that will enhance the quality of life for ALL our children so they can achieve high standards of academic achievement. Do not expose our young, our most precious commodity to what is scientifically proven to cause damage to their brains and lower IQ. All of our children deserve the opportunity to be successful and become college ready, have high quality teachers, and have stable family homes. Protect the children and their futures. Oppose S.B.16.  

1. Marijuana Use: Detrimental to Youth | American College of Pediatricians  
2. SAM  
3. Shortage Areas  
https://wpirc.tips/Shortage-Areas  
4. "How does marijuana use affect school, work, and social life? | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)  
5. Brain Development, Teen Behavior and Preventing Drug Use  
https://drugfree.org/article/brain-development-teen-behavior/  
6. DrugFacts: Marijuana | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)  
https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana  
7. SAM  
8. Yale study: Marijuana may really be gateway drug - Connecticut Post  
11. DrugFacts: Marijuana | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)  

Thank you for accepting my written testimony.  
Sincerely,