SB 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis - Opposed

Members of the Judiciary committee, my name is Brian Essenter. I am a pharmacist, dispensary manager and a resident of Monroe, CT. Thank you for listening to our testimony. As someone who has been an active participant in these hearings over the past few years, I can see that we have progressed in our conversation of the legalization of cannabis for Adult Use. We are now talking about policy and specifics of how a legal adult use market will be implemented. However, I believe that this is where the bill comes up short. IF there are not significant changes and clarifications made in this bill, I would strongly oppose its passage. The portions that I would need to see changed before I would consider supporting it are:

1. Sec. 4. The Judiciary Branch has testified that they would require changes to the language of the expungement before being able to implement it. This would mean more delays for those who we all agree have been wrongfully incarcerated! Why have we not already figured out a fix for this?! This is THE most impactful aspect of this bill! There must be plenty of people willing to volunteer their time to help figure out a way.

2. Sec. 24. By putting this on DCP’s desk you are just kicking the can down the road. The DCP is an over worked and UNDERFUNDED department as it is. They have been doing what they can to keep their heads above water with the Medical Marijuana Program. These are only recommendations. Then we would no doubt have to debate them too.

3. Sec. 36. Home Grow is also just passed on down the line with recommendations to come July 1, 2023 and then implementation will take time as well.

4. Sec. 51 – 53. The taxing and structure. The tax rate is too high. It will end up creating products that are too expensive allowing the illegal-market to flourish. This is exactly what we are seeing happen in California and Massachusetts right now.

5. Sec. 57. Please explain the intent of this section. It does not make sense. “Tax on cannabis imported into the state”? This is currently federal felony.

6. Finally, I am most concerned with how this will impact the Medical Marijuana Program. There are some great things in SB16 to help the medical program survive. But we will need a thriving medical program. The elimination of fees is a great start. But the DCP is already UNDERFUNDED and overworked. They need more help to keep the medical program growing. We could also help the medical program by adding 1 final condition to the list and that being “At the Clinicians Discretion”. This would allow our medical professionals to do their job within their own comfort levels as they do currently with other medications. Allowing the DCP or the Board of Physicians focus their time on more pressing matters.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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