March 2, 2020

Testimony IN FAVOR of SB16 AAC the Adult Use of Cannabis

Submitted by Lindsay Farrell, Connecticut Director

Representative Stafstrom, Senator Winfield, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for holding a hearing on this bill today.

My name is Lindsay Farrell and I’m the state director of the Connecticut Working Families Party. I’m here today in strong support of SB16 AAC the Adult Use of Cannabis. CT Working Families fights for a democracy where every voice matters and an economy that works for everyone. We strive to be the political home of the multi-racial working class and run strategic legislative and electoral campaigns to win material gains for our people.

We are in strong support of legalization of marijuana with a clear emphasis on equity. While legalization will obviously offer our state a needed revenue stream, it’s about much more than the budgetary gains.

In Connecticut and around the country, the War on Drugs has for decades done exactly what it was intended to do - devastation of communities of color, torn families apart, moved people by the millions into the Prison Industrial Complex at a profit for many companies, and deepened racial and class divisions. It will take many policy and structural reforms to right these wrongs. But cannabis legalization, done correctly and equitably, is certainly a step in the right direction.

We stand with others speaking today to demand a truly equitable legalization bill that includes the following:

- The legislation absolutely must include labor neutrality language so that as this industry grows in Connecticut, these workers can benefit from collective bargaining rights and democracy in their workplace at farms and dispensaries. When workers can form unions, we all benefit.

- Legalization must not just enrich a handful of corporations - those closest to pain must be closest to the solutions. Legislation must prioritize those who have been victimized by the war
on drugs to be able to invest, start businesses, and profit from legalization. Ex-offenders must be prioritized for ownership and jobs in the new industry.

- We must strike marijuana offense from records of individuals with this legislation - no one should be penalized in job searches, housing applications, or more for prior marijuana convictions.

At the center, this legislation is about opportunity - we must ensure that opportunity is equitable and considers those working in the industry as well as those wronged by our previous laws.

Thank you for your time today.