Dear members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing to express my support of Senate Bill 6, an act authorizing and regulating the retail sale of marijuana.

When you look up the history behind why marijuana was criminalized, it becomes very clear that it was born out of racism towards African Americans and Mexican Americans. Harry Anslinger, the first commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, a predecessor to the Drug Enforcement Administration, and arguably the father of marijuana prohibition once said,"There are 100,000 total marijuana smokers in the U.S., and most are Negroes, Hispanics, Filipinos and entertainers. Their Satanic music, jazz and swing result from marijuana use. This marijuana causes white women to seek sexual relations with Negroes, entertainers and any others. Reefer makes darkies think they're as good as white men."

This also encouraged many states through out the Jim Crow south to pass drug laws as a way to disenfranchise African Americans from voting or running for public office. The word itself "marijuana" comes from Mexican Spanish, and was popularized by Mr. Anslinger. We may think this type of bigotry is no longer an issue more than half a century later, but that is not true.

In 2013 the American Civil Liberties Union released a report that compiled 10 years worth of arrest records for marijuana possession from all 50 states, and they found that on average black people were 3.5 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people, despite data that suggested they use the drug at about the same rate. In Connecticut black people were 3.3 times more likely to be arrested than white people and in our worst offending county in was 6.8 times. All of these arrests and incarcerations cost our state tens of millions of dollars annually, money that could have been better spent elsewhere like funding the state pension system.

I have heard the argument that marijuana is a "gateway drug" that caused the opioid epidemic. If you are looking for the culprit of the opioid epidemic you don't have to look any further than Stamford Connecticut the home of Purdue Pharma. In a lawsuit filed by the Massachusetts Attorney General, Purdue Pharma, specifically members of the founding Sackler family, encouraged doctors across the nation to prescribe their new drug Oxycontin for all types of pain issues, in exchange for kick backs and fancy dinners. They continued to do this even after the company pled guilty to criminal charges of misbranding and deceiving people about the dangers of Oxycontin, three executives pled guilty, and the company paid over $600 million in fines. It reminds me of a stand up routine comedian Chris Rock once did where he said,"Could you imagine if the Philip Morris family was a black family with jheri-curls from Mississippi? Do you know how illegal a pack of cigarettes would be? You would get fifty years just for a carton of Newports!"

According to the CDC excessive alcohol use causes 88,000 deaths a year, tobacco use is responsible for 480,000 deaths a year and is the number one cause of preventable death in the nation. Marijuana has never been linked to a single overdose death in the history of medical literature, it's simply not toxic enough.

From a tax revenue view point, marijuana has proven to be a huge source of revenue for states that have legalized the sale of marijuana. Since 2014 Colorado has received over a billion dollars in marijuana tax revenue, Washington collected $319 million in just one year's time, California received over $300 million in tax revenue in 2018, and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue reported that the state collected more than $420 million in the first full calendar year of legalization.

I personally visited one of those marijuana dispensaries in Massachusetts and I saw quite a few cars in the parking lot that had Connecticut licence plates. That could have been tax revenue for our state!
Marijuana prohibition has done nothing to better people's lives, has destroyed the lives of many people of color, cost the tax payers of our state billions of dollars, and has had no effect on marijuana's popularity or use. The time has come for our state to end marijuana prohibition once and for all.

Thank you for your tire,

Leanne Harpin