Testimony of

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SB 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis

Thank you, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to speak on SB 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis. My name is Keri Hoehne. I am a resident of Torrington, and I am the Executive Assistant to the President at the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 371. The UFCW supports the legalization of recreational cannabis in Connecticut only with the addition of labor peace agreements as a condition of cannabis licensure and renewal.

UFCW Local 371 is headquartered in Westport, Connecticut and represents over 8,000 members in Connecticut who work in retail food, food service, food processing and healthcare. Nationally, UFCW represents over 1.3 million men and women who work in highly regulated industries including the legal cannabis industry. Wherever cannabis is legalized, the UFCW is committed to building family sustaining jobs and a strong, diverse and skilled workforce.

A labor peace agreement is an agreement between an employer and a union that prohibits unions and their members from engaging in strikes, boycotts, picketing and any other interference with the employer’s business. In return, the employer agrees not to interfere with efforts by the labor union to communicate with, and attempt to organize and represent the employer’s workers. These negotiated labor peace agreements create an orderly and fair process for workers to decide whether they want or don’t want representation.

Labor peace agreements are good for the health and safety of workers and the product. Workers who have access to representation are more likely to receive safety and technical training that reduces workplace accidents and improves product quality. Unionized cannabis in other states has led to safer preparation of cannabis products and proper use of pesticides. As of 2018, 50% of workers reported they had received formal training, but only 20% of workers specifically received medical cannabis training.¹ In 2019, UFCW coordinated the first-ever OSHA safety training with cannabis workers in California.

Multiple other states have chosen to include labor peace requirements for cannabis licensure. California, New Jersey and New York all require cannabis operators to sign agreements requiring labor peace. Pennsylvania and Illinois incentivize operators with a merit-based system that gives points for labor peace agreements. Each of these states faced similar questions and
arguments about labor peace and each of these states, their legislature and legislative counsel agreed that labor peace requirements in cannabis were good and consistent with state and federal law.

UFCW supports a recreational cannabis industry in Connecticut that will create sustainable jobs for families for the foreseeable future. Our experience is that labor peace agreements are an effective way to achieve that. Labor peace agreements will reward responsible businesses and ensure that Connecticut’s cannabis industry is driven by companies committed to making long-term investments in local communities.

The Connecticut cannabis industry presents an unparalleled opportunity to build a new kind of industry for Connecticut, one that gives workers an opportunity to exercise workplace democracy to improve both the industry and Connecticut communities. One strong mechanism to do so is the labor peace agreement.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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1 Cannabis Industry Journal, 9/6/2018