Testimony for Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing regarding SB 16: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS.

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Chairmen Winfield and Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

For the past 31 years, The Governor's Prevention Partnership has made it our mission to safeguard young people from the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Although the conversation about marijuana has changed and we recognize the likelihood that at some point this legislation will move forward, our mission has not changed. If Connecticut is to pass legislation legalizing recreational marijuana for adults, the state must focus on keeping the drug out of vulnerable hands.

Most importantly, this legislation outlines that it remains illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to consume or possess marijuana, similarly to alcohol. Studies have shown that the young brain is not fully capable of making good choices until age 25 because it is not fully developed [1].

The Partnership also wants to suggest the inclusion of the expansion of Connecticut’s Social Host Law to include cannabis. Language was included in the proposed bill from 2019 to include a repeal of Section 30-89a of the general statutes to include cannabis or cannabis products.

When the Social Host Law was originally enacted in 2012, some parents had accepted the perceived reality that their teenaged children may experiment with alcohol or marijuana, and that it could be done in a controlled environment without breaking the law.

Our state's current law goes beyond the actions of any minor person involved and may also include what may be called a social host. A social host is someone age twenty-one and older who may either provide alcohol to a minor or at least be aware of a minor's possession of alcohol. The language as currently written in this bill includes an expansion to cannabis.

The state currently makes it illegal for any social host to permit a person under the age of 21 from being in possession of alcohol on any private property including a house, apartment or other private residence.

This is a common-sense expansion to put cannabis under the same umbrella as alcohol and the treatment of legal consumers supplying the substance to underage people. Connecticut must send the message that marijuana is not safe or legal for people under 21, and that irresponsible adults will face consequences for putting young people at risk.
Connecticut must put the safety of children front-and-center as these conversations take shape. For legal marijuana to succeed in Connecticut, young people must be taught about the real dangers of using the drug at a young age through a robust public awareness campaign. We understand that some teenagers will use marijuana regardless of what laws are passed. This is not a question of prohibition. We are simply taking a common-sense approach to a difficult issue, and strongly urging Connecticut lawmakers to adopt laws that will limit drug exposure to young people.

We look forward to continuing this conversation and advocating for the safety of Connecticut’s young people.

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