Attention Judiciary Committee Members,

Let me start by saying thank you for your time to consider cannabis legalization today. My name is Jared Kozlowski from Portland, Connecticut. I'm testifying today to share my informed opinion on why Connecticut should legalize recreational marijuana. With my testimony, I would also like to highlight ways in which SB 16 can be improved, while expressing my general support for the bill, and its overall goal to legalize and sensibly regulate marijuana for adult use.

Now is the time to legalize cannabis in our state and end the stigma associated with being a productive, otherwise law-abiding cannabis consumer. The culture needs to evolve because for far too long Connecticut's marijuana policies have made cannabis consumers, people I love and care about, hide in the shadows of our society. These people are scared to talk about their cannabis consumption outside of their own groups because they don't want to become victims of the criminally enforced war on drugs. This keeps cannabis consumers underground, buying unregulated black-market marijuana products on the streets. These policies have eroded trust in the government, including its ability to regulate the cannabis market. Government over-regulation will result in inflated marijuana sales taxes, strict licensing and consumption laws, all of which are reflected in the structure of SB 16. I feel as though we're replacing an unjust law with a slightly better one that allows access to cannabis, but with significant barriers to access for every day consumers and entrepreneurs. Why create more boundaries for adults to access safe, tested, legal marijuana? Help them regain the government's trust in a way that brings wealth to our state, legal cannabis. Connecticut needs ways to educate passionate residents about the plant they are ingesting that's both affordable and knowledgeable. Personally, I would like to learn more than I can afford. I've learned early on settling for the knowledge I can obtain freely is going to help for the next person. For the past eight years I have had some real struggles in my path but I'm here today and I'm thankful for that.

My overall point: I support this legislation mostly because it will end the stigma of being a marijuana consumer despite being a productive, gainfully employed, otherwise law-abiding citizen of our state. This legislation will also encourage private industry to establish a safe regulated marijuana market in which myself and people like me can access safe, regulated product rather than being forced to the black market. Please know that I support this legislation, but I see significant opportunities for improvement now, or in the future. These improvements include no possession limits, home grow rights for CT citizens, and investment in communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs. Thank you very much for your time today.

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