March 2, 2020

STATEMENT OF THE WATERBURY REGIONAL CHAMBER TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OPPOSING RAISED SENATE BILL 16 (LCO 724):
AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS.

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary Committee,
my name is David Krechevsky and I am the Director of Public Policy & Economic
Development for the Waterbury Regional Chamber. Thank you for the opportunity to
submit testimony on this legislation.

The Waterbury Regional Chamber, which serves 14 communities in Greater Waterbury
and represents the interests of nearly 1,000 member businesses on matters of public
policy, strongly opposes Senate Bill 16 (LCO 724), An Act Concerning the Adult Use of
Cannabis.

The bill attempts to address the concerns of employers by stating in Section 45 that, “No
employer shall be required to make accommodations for an employee or be required to
allow an employee to: (1) Perform his or her duties while under the influence of cannabis,
or (2) possess, use or otherwise consume cannabis while performing such duties.”

This provision, however, is flawed because the bill does not define what “under the
influence of cannabis” means. Unlike alcohol, for which the state has set a legal blood
alcohol limit of 0.08, no such blood level has been defined or established for impairment
by THC, the psychoactive substance in cannabis. In addition, I refer the committee to a
report to Congress issued in July 2017 by the National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration (NHTSA) titled “Marijuana-Impaired Driving,” which states that, unlike
alcohol, which has a direct correlation between the level of alcohol in the blood stream
and the level of impairment, there is no such correlation for THC and impairment. The
report states, “As expected, the peak THC level is reached soon after smoking ends.
However, peak performance deficits are observed long after the peak THC level occurs.”
The report adds, “THC level in blood (or oral fluid) does not appear to be an accurate and
reliable predictor of impairment from THC.” *(Pages 7-8)*

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Given that there is no reliable way to determine an individual’s level of impairment, this becomes a subjective exercise that will lead to disputes between employers and their employees who ingest cannabis outside of work. Such potential impairment can have a negative effect on productivity, and could be especially troublesome for manufacturers, particularly those producing parts with high tolerances, such as parts for medical or aerospace use, and who utilize equipment that can be dangerous if operated while impaired. The bill attempts to address this by allowing employers to conduct screening tests of employees in certain jobs where the need for safety is at a premium – such as medical careers, caring for children, driving, or operating dangerous equipment – but the value of such screening tests is questionable, as presented in the NHTSA report.

This leads to a larger point: There still is a tremendous amount that we don’t know about cannabis. Because it is still categorized as a Schedule 1 substance by the federal government, cannabis and THC have not been as thoroughly tested as other substances to determine their long-term health effects. Many of our Chamber’s healthcare-related organizations have raised serious questions about allowing recreational use of cannabis/marijuana, citing the potential for abuse and the unknown long-term physical and mental health impacts, especially on our youth. U.S. Surgeon General Vice Admiral Jerome Adams has issued an advisory warning that the level of THC in marijuana increased three-fold from 1995 to 2014, and that as the TCH increases, so does the risk of addiction. He also noted that edible marijuana takes time to be absorbed, increasing the risk of unintentional overdoses, as well as accidental ingestion by children and adolescents.

The Chamber shares these concerns, and believes it defies logic to expand the legal use of cannabis at a time when the state is dealing with the public health crisis of opioid abuse, as well as at a time when efforts are being made to limit the use of electronic cigarettes, especially among teens and young adults. The legislature’s focus should be on what is best for the health of the citizens of Connecticut, and we believe legalizing the recreational use of cannabis does not meet that standard.

For these reasons, the Chamber urges the committee to reject SB 16.

Thank you.

David Krechevsky
Director of Public Policy
Waterbury Regional Chamber

NHTSA Report: Marijuana-Impaired Driving: