Testimony Supporting *Senate Bill No. 16 An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.*

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom; Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Megan Krementowski, and I am an MSW policy student at the UConn School of Social Work. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 16, *An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.*

This bill presents a chance for Connecticut to further honor individual privacy rights, prevent discrimination, promote economic development, and work to right the wrongs that marijuana prohibition has placed on communities of color, youth, and poor communities throughout our state.

The criminalization of marijuana has been selectively enforced, and this enforcement has relied on illegal searches and other methods that violate civil liberties. These laws criminalizing marijuana impose the hardships of an arrest and arrest record, and often prison terms on people who are disproportionately young, poor, Black, and brown.

According to the *Office of Legislative Research,* 11 states have legalized the possession of specified quantities of cannabis for recreational use by adults age 21 and older, generally regulating it in a manner similar to alcohol. There is no reason Connecticut should not be the next state to legalize marijuana.

A *poll* by PEW Research Center says that two-thirds of Americans favor marijuana legalization, and 74% of millennials are also for this legalization. This is a demographic we need to attract to the state to grow our population and fill Connecticut’s significant workforce shortages.

Although I am supporting this bill, I recommend adding language that provides automatic expungement for anyone convicted for possessing cannabis. As the bill is currently written, anyone convicted of possessing cannabis prior to this legislation if it were to pass would have to file a court petition to erase the related records. Connecticut’s history of disproportionately arresting people for marijuana possession overall, and its track record of racial disparities in this enforcement, mean that communities continue to suffer from decades of prior marijuana criminalization.

I therefore encourage this committee to strengthen this bill with prohibitions on discrimination against people with marijuana-related convictions. The War on Marijuana, like the War on Drugs overall, has torn apart families and devastated communities acting as a vehicle for racial injustice. I urge you to support this bill to mitigate these past injustices and prevent them in the future.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify today.
Cited:
