My name is Michele Palge and I am a life long resident and voter in Connecticut. I am addressing these comments specifically to any legislator that is in favor of SB16, legalizing the adult use of cannabis, and any legislator that is on the fence about supporting this bill.

You seem to be focusing on the revenue expected to be generated by enacting this legislation without considering the costs. Sure, the state will bring in millions of dollars in taxes and fees, and a few producers and distributors will also cash in, but there are also huge costs that will also result. And this isn’t speculation or guessing. One only has to look at Colorado to see the consequences. The following facts are found in a 2019 report entitled “The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact” found at https://rmhidta.org/files/D2DF/FINAL-Volume6.pdf (copy & paste in browser)

Section I: Traffic Fatalities & Impaired Driving
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths in which drivers tested positive for marijuana increased 109% while all Colorado traffic deaths increased 31%.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana more than doubled from 55 in 2013 to 115 people killed in 2018.
  - This equates to one person killed every 3 days in 2018 compared to one person killed every 6½ days in 2013.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, the percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths that were marijuana related increased from 15% in 2013 to 23% in 2018.

Section II: Marijuana Use
Since recreational marijuana was legalized:
- Past month marijuana use for ages 12 and older increased 58% and is 78% higher than the national average, currently ranked 4th in the nation.
- Adult marijuana use increased 94% and is 96% higher than the national average, currently ranked 4th in the nation.
- College age marijuana use increased 18 percent and is 48% higher than the national average, currently ranked 6th in the nation.
- Youth marijuana use decreased 14 percent and is 40% higher than the national average, currently ranked 6th in the nation.

Section III: Public Health
- The yearly number of emergency department visits related to marijuana increased 54% after the legalization of recreational marijuana (2013 compared to 2017).
- The yearly number of marijuana-related hospitalizations increased 101% after the legalization of recreational marijuana (2013 compared to 2017).
• Marijuana only exposures more than quadrupled in the six-year average (2013-2018) since recreational marijuana was legalized compared to the six-year average (2007-2012) prior to legalization.

• The percent of suicide incidents in which toxicology results were positive for marijuana has increased from 14% in 2013 to 23% in 2017.

**Section IV: Black Market**

• RMHIDTA Colorado Drug Task Forces (10) conducted 257 investigations of black market marijuana in Colorado resulting in:
  
  • 192 felony arrests
  • 6.08 tons of marijuana seized
  • 60,091 marijuana plants seized
  • 25 different states the marijuana was destined

• Seizures of Colorado marijuana in the U.S. mail system has increased 1,042% from an average of 52 parcels (2009-2012) to an average of 594 parcels (2013-2017) during the time recreational marijuana has been legal.

**Section V: Societal Impact**

• Marijuana tax revenue represent approximately nine tenths of one percent of Colorado’s FY 2018 budget.

64 percent of local jurisdictions in Colorado have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.

Why would any rational person think that Connecticut would be any different than what happened in Colorado or that the costs wouldn’t outweigh the benefits over the long run?

My husband and I are raising our children in Connecticut because we grew up here and we love the state. That being said however, we do not want to have to drive on our roads with other drivers high on marijuana. We do not want to work with coworkers that want to smoke a joint before coming to work or on their lunch break. We don’t want to have to pay higher healthcare costs because of increased marijuana-related medical costs. We don’t want to have to pay higher insurance costs because of marijuana-related insurance claims. We don’t want our children to go to school and be taught teachers or other school staff that use marijuana to relax. And we don’t want our children growing up in a state where they are taught that marijuana is harmful and illegal for them but it’s okay for the adults they see around them.

My mother and sister have legal cannabis because they both have had cancer. They may or may not have needed it but they found it helpful in dealing with the pain associated with their disease. It was also helpful during chemotherapy with their appetite. I have family members that have used the black market to use cannabis recreationally. They have also gone to, and some live in Massachusetts, and they
will probably purchase legally in Ct if able. I do not think the rest of Ct should pay the price for them to be inconvenienced and have to drive further. There is plenty of data to show us that the revenue is never worth it. If you don’t like the Colorado study look at the studies coming out of Washington state very similar results.

Remember that you were elected to represent the interests of your constituents and you are expected to vote accordingly, not based on how you personally feel about an issue or how some well-funded special interest group may want you to vote. We the people put you in office and we the people will not return you to the office if we the people don’t think you represent our interests. If you vote in favor of this bill, we hope you stand up and do so very clearly so we will know who you are. At that point you can rest assured that we the people will be voting AGAINST YOU and in favor of anyone that opposes you in the next election.

Listen to your constituents, the facts and common sense and vote against SB16.

Thank you.

[Signature]
Executive Summary

The Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) program has published annual reports every year since 2013 tracking the impact of legalizing recreational marijuana in Colorado. The purpose is to provide data and information so that policy makers and citizens can make informed decisions on the issue of marijuana legalization.

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