Testimony of Michelle Seagull
Commissioner of Consumer Protection
Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing, March 2, 2020

SENATE BILL 16 “AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS”

Senator Winfield, Senator Kissel, Representative Stafstrom, Representative Rebimbas and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Michelle Seagull, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 16, An Act Concerning the Adult Use of Cannabis.

Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont already have some form of a market for adult-use cannabis, and nearby states including New York, Rhode Island, and New Jersey are poised to legalize adult-use in the near future. We cannot ignore or avoid this fact. Cannabis is currently, and will be, increasingly available to the residents of Connecticut. It is our responsibility to ensure that it is regulated in the safest, most secure manner – to protect our children and the public health and safety.

Due to DCP’s administration of the state’s successful medical marijuana program, the Department has significant expertise in regulated cannabis markets. The Department has also been in active in regional and national discussions with regulators of adult use cannabis. Some of
the learnings from those regional and national discussions have informed this legislation, and these discussions and collaborations will inform our recommendations in future years.

This bill, which was submitted by Governor Lamont, would require DCP to report back to the Connecticut General Assembly next January with recommendations for a regulatory framework to permit the retail sale of cannabis for recreational adult use. Many of the factors DCP would be tasked with considering were based upon last year’s bill that was favorably reported out of the General Law Committee.

The proposal would also create an Equity Commission, administered within DCP, with nine members including the Commissioner of DCP. The Commission would also be charged with reporting back to the General Assembly next January with recommendations about how to promote and encourage full participation in the cannabis industry by persons from communities that have been disproportionately harmed by the prohibition on cannabis.

The Department thanks the Governor for including two positions at DCP in his budget adjustments for FY2:. These positions will support the work that DCP will do upon passage of this legislation, including administratively supporting the Equity Commission.

DCP worked with the Governor’s office and the Office of Policy and Management on this language and our agency looks forward to continuing to work on this proposal with this Committee as well as the other committees who have cognizance over this issue throughout this legislative session.