To the Joint Committee on Judiciary and respective Representatives,

I support the Governor's bill (now SB 16) titled "AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADULT USE OF CANNABIS" and I encourage you to as well.

Connecticut has a huge opportunity to both reduce the burden on the criminal justice system, revitalize communities through economic and agrarian activities, and begin to undo years of damage caused by the war on drugs.

The costs of criminalizing marijuana to any degree is staggering from incarceration to the time devoted by law enforcement. These resources could be directed to address other issues such as sexual assault, violent crimes, and prosecution of illicit opioids that result in astronomically more harm and deaths than cannabis. We have a duty to prevent harm and while there is harm associated with marijuana like tobacco or alcohol, it pales in comparison to that caused by opioids and violent criminal acts.

With the rich farmlands along the Connecticut river and the strong agriculture program at the University of Connecticut, we have a prime opportunity to cultivate and properly study cannabis. There are farming communities I personally know in this river valley that would love an opportunity to grow hemp with increased THC content for sale or recreational use that are struggling as it is in the era of big farms. Iconic communities can benefit from this cash crop as many still do from tobacco, supporting the long standing images and cultures of the state.

Lastly, the legacy of the criminalization of cannabis from the 1930s to present day can begin to be addressed. The effects are far and wide from early mischaracterization of the plant as addictive (highly habit forming undeniably, but not addictive in the same sense as nicotine) and maddening (see "reefer madness") to the mass incarceration of all types of people, from experimenting youth to those attempting to make a living. I have seen this in my own life as a roommate of mine during my early time at the University of Connecticut nearly was removed from the campus and stricken with a huge blemish on his criminal record for having a trivial amount of cannabis. He went on to have a stellar record of campus involvement and engineering credentials, the exact type of student the state hopes to create and retain.

As a younger voter in the state, this is a key issue for myself and my friends. We see legalization as a change that aligns another product with tobacco and alcohol while reducing the oxponence of the state and rootifying the past.

Please consider supporting this bill for the future of Connecticut, its people, and the nation.

Respectfully,
Christopher Zins