

Dear General Law Committee Members,

I am a small-scale cannabis farmer located in Killingworth CT. I received one of the first Hemp licenses from the Department of Agriculture in 2019 and have been very active in ensuring that our state hemp community has the support it needs to prosper. Today I would like to address bill HB5329.

It is my strong opinion that it is asinine to decriminalize cannabis and turn around just months later and introduce a bill that would result in jail time for gifting. Obviously, this provision is aimed at deterring private parties that are taking advantage of the gifting clause in order to essentially sell marijuana on the black market via donations. I take no issue with wanting to deter these events, but I would like to point out that they are only thriving because there is no other access to legal marijuana at this time. The most productive way to deter these markets is to open legal dispensaries and ensure that there is enough product to keep the shelves full.

I would like stress how important it is for you to **view hemp farmers as EXISTING cannabis producers** in order to meet the heightened demand. We are a community of experienced cannabis cultivators who are poised to immediately participate in the supply of recreational marijuana in order to meet what can be expected to be a 10x increase in demand. Both hemp (CBD) and marijuana (THC) are derived from the same plant (*Cannabis sativa*) and only differ in the genetic make-up that allows for CBD vs. THC production (think brown hair v. blond hair). The existing MMPs are being given preferential access to this market, however it is unlikely they will be able to meet demand in a timely fashion while still providing enough product to the medical market. It will take a minimum of 9 months to a year for newly licensed facilities to start producing at scale and this is assuming they have no cultivation or quality issues. Under the existing flawed lottery system there will be a shortage of legal cannabis in Connecticut resulting in a robust and healthy black market.

Hemp farmers differ dramatically from the established corporate producers in that we are typically smaller operations who take pride in our artisanal cannabis products, operate sustainably and have spent years investing in talent through either employment, mentoring or training programs. We will be able to provide dispensaries with unique products and an unmatched level of quality simply not offered by the large producers. We are well versed with compliance already and there would be minimal effort required to transition our crops to grow recreational marijuana. We are a diverse community that embraces equity (my business is 100% women owned and operated with a 40% minority employment history). And most importantly we are your people – Connecticut Farmers who have invested our hearts, resources

and time into becoming top notch cannabis cultivators, not faceless entities owned by out of state corporations.

New York State has taken a proactive stance on meeting demand and supporting their farming communities by allowing existing hemp farmers to apply for a provisional license and I ask that you do the same and in a timely fashion that allows for cultivation this growing season.

I would also like to take this opportunity to bring it to your attention that the existing lottery imposes no limitations on the number of applications an applicant/entity can submit for any one license type. DCP regulations have made a mockery of the lottery system by allowing any one entity unlimited entries. There should be a limit on the number of entities any one applicant can form and one submission per entity. The existing framework is a pay-to-play raffle allowing someone with an unlimited budget to enter the lottery numerous times. This must be reformed!

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

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