



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

TESTIMONY
Opposition to
S.B. 888 “AN ACT RESPONSIBLY AND EQUITABLY REGULATING ADULT-USE CANNABIS”
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Public Hearing
February 26, 2021

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut’s Catholic Bishops, is *opposed* to S.B 888 due to the negative impacts the legalization of marijuana would have on the residents of our state, including those under 21 years of age. The need to raise state funds, or the desire to respect individual freedom, does not outweigh the negative impact the legalization of recreational marijuana will have on our society. Our state and nation is currently fighting a major opioid problem which has destroyed many lives. Catholic social teaching states that “the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense.”¹ This offense is against the individual and society. The members of the Judiciary Committee must act to protect the common good and not open the doors for another drug related epidemic to develop.

Many individuals and organizations will attempt to convince the Judiciary Committee that legalizing recreational marijuana will have little impact on society. This is blatantly untrue. The more a mood and mind altering drug is used in society, the greater the number of adults and minors who will be negatively impacted. The fact that marijuana has a negative impact on individuals is stressed in a 2019 article published in the well-respected British medical journal *The Lancet*. This study revealed that “Daily cannabis use was associated with **increased odds of psychotic disorder** compared with never users..., increasing to **nearly five-times** increased odds for daily use of high-potency types of cannabis.”² The mental health impact of marijuana is reflected in the American Automobile Association (AAA) opposition to the legalization of marijuana for recreational use due to its inherent traffic safety risks and because of the difficulties in writing legislation that protects the public and treats drivers fairly.³

The driving factor behind this legislation is financial, for the state and private businesses, and not the well-being of our society. The state has already decriminalized small amounts of marijuana to avoid prosecution of individual users and to relieve stress on our law enforcement departments. S.B. 888 would now send the message that cannabis use is appropriate and does not harm one’s health

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (#2291)

² “The Contribution of Cannabis Use to Variation in the Incidence to Variation in Psychotic Disorder Across Europe”. *The Lancet*, March 19, 2019

³ <https://newsroom.aaa.com/2020/01/fatal-crashes-involving-drivers-who-test-positive-for-marijuana-increase-after-state-legalizes-drug/#:~:text=The%20latest%20AAA%20Foundation%20research,%2Dpositive%20drivers%20increased%2C%20too.>

or ability to function in society. Do we really want employees, including teachers and medical staff, to perform their jobs after daily use of marijuana? Do we want our students to come to school under the influence of marijuana? Even though the bill specifies that legalization is only for those over 21 years of age, how well will that be enforced? We know that alcohol is limited to those above 21 years of age in our state, but that law is widely disregarded by adults and teens.

This legislation also attempts to address the drug problem within the minority communities within our state. One of those solutions is the elimination of prior arrest records for small amounts of marijuana from a person's criminal record. This can be done outside of the complete legalization of marijuana. Another proposed solution in the bill ensures that special financing is available for to minority communities so that local business people open local dispensaries. Yet, this would seem to limit their access to opening dispensaries in suburban enclaves with stricter zoning regulations. How this actually helps the minority community of the drug problems it faces, especially on its streets and with its young people, is not very clear. The members of this committee should take a look at how these efforts have been fulfilled in other states. I think they will be disappointed in the results they find. Also, the taxes collected on the sale of marijuana would be egregiously regressive, especially if the dispensaries are established primarily in cities.

The Conference believes that in addition to the issues raised above many other factors must also be considered, which include:

- 1. It is not the same as alcohol** - When you take alcohol, it has its effects, and then leaves the body. When you use marijuana, it gets into the tissues of the body and is stored in the fatty tissue of the body, which includes the brain.
- 2. Affects newborn babies** - The THC in marijuana today is four to five times stronger than in the 1980s. It can be passed on to babies in high concentrations in breast milk and has been shown to cause harm in developing brains. Research suggests babies exposed to marijuana in utero may develop verbal, memory and behavioral problems during early childhood.

The Conference finds no benefit to our state, except financial, and urges the Judiciary Committee to reject S.B. 888. Passage of this bill may enrich the coffers of the State, and private businesses, but will do so at an unacceptable cost to the health and quality of life of its citizens.

Deacon David Reynolds

Associate Director for Public Policy

Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference