

Ohio Senate
General Government Committee
March 7, 2023
Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 9

Good Afternoon, Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the Senate General Government Committee. My name is Ally Reaves and I am the Founder/President of Midwest CannaWomen. I have worked in the Ohio Medical Cannabis industry for a couple of companies since May 2017.

In October 2017, I created Midwest CannaWomen, which is my small business, to create solutions through BOP and DOC approved events in Ohio for Licensed MMJ operators to create resourceful and impact opportunities for the industry to connect and educate and provide resources for inclusion for Minorities and all Women. Nickole Ross is the Executive Board Advisor and her sister Neariah Ross is the Junior Board Executive Advisor. Also, I am the Sales Director for Noohra Labs. Lastly, I am the State Director for Minorities For Medical Marijuana for Ohio. Today, I am here representing my business, Midwest CannaWomen and a Patient Advocate in Ohio. I am a businesswoman as well. I am selfless. I am grateful and blessed to say that I been able be here.

I appreciate the work of Senators Schuring and Huffman to improve the Medical Marijuana Control Program with the introduction of Senate Bill 9, but unfortunately, I testify before you today as an opponent to the bill with grave concerns that as currently written the bill will do more harm than good to the program.

There are over 11.8 million Ohio residents and we have only 160,000 active registered patients. The State of Ohio has issued 200 licenses for the Medical Cannabis industry, with some operators in the Provisional stages or not. The demand for operations in the industry has been met. Now, we need more patients.

On April 20th, 2017, my life changed forever. I attended my first Cannabis event because I was applying for an 80-hour internship to work in Admissions for the Cleveland School of Cannabis. The event was great! I was able to meet so many wonderful people who were already in the industry. At this event, Irvin Rosenfeld was the Guest Speaker. He explained to the crowd that he is the longest surviving of the final four Federal Medical Cannabis Patients in the U.S. The Federal Government has been supplying him 10 Medical Cannabis cigarettes (Pre-rolls) to smoke per day for over 32 years for his sever bone tumor disorder, which is a terminal condition. He was in a wheelchair. As he begun educating us about his journey, he described the pain he feels daily and how he copes with the paralysis in his body. Then Irvin did something remarkable that changed my life, he stood up and walked around carefully but confident. I began to cry. I couldn't believe he could walk after hearing his story. I couldn't believe he is real because he explained his gratefulness that his quality of life had exceeded once he began to receive his cannabis medicine for over 32 years. He is still alive! He is extremely successful. I had never met, heard, or even thought this was a reality in this world. Once, I shook his hand and received an autographed book from him, I went on a mission trying to educate about the possibilities of becoming a legal Medical Cannabis Patient. Once I was hired for the Admissions Officer role in May 2017 at the Cleveland School of Cannabis, I went on a rampage trying to educate everyone, rather you believed me or not about all the beautiful opportunities and people in the Cannabis industry. Irvin left CSC with one of his Cannisters

that he received his medicine. I took the Cannister to my office and I used to show everyone the can and explain Irvin's story.

There are a couple of amazing things that I like about Senate Bill 9. I would like to express my appreciation to the Senate Bill 9 Sponsors: Senators Dr. Huffman and Senator Schuring for including initiatives like:

- Adding new conditions like Autism and Opioid Use Disorder.
- Including conditions that have been added by the State Medical Board like terminal illness, and Spasticity
- Including conditions like: Arthritis and Migraines, which the Medical Board has stated are allowed under Chronic Pain.
- Also, thank you Senator Huffman and Senator Schuring for giving Physician's the right to use their discretion to approve patients for other conditions that they believe would benefit from Medical Cannabis, though you are concerned Physicians will fear sanctions on their license and be hesitant to use this provision.

There are so many changes to the Program that should be included in Senate Bill 9 to help Ohio's patients.

- Eliminate the annual \$50 fee charged by the program for a Patient Card: It costs the average patient over \$200 a year to register for the Medical Cannabis Program (\$150 doctor visit + \$50 card) compared to \$0.00 to purchase in an Adult Use market or the illicit market. Ohio's Registered Patients have spent over \$120 million dollars on Annual Registration fees & Doctor visits since the program started – before they purchase any Medical Cannabis.
- Create a Category for "Lifelong Conditions": Patients with incurable conditions should only have to visit a recommending physician once in their lifetime, rather than annually (Illinois has this option). Their condition is not going away. Patients with these conditions visit the physician treating their condition regularly. However, because most major hospital systems prohibit their Physician's from Recommending, the primary or treating Physician is typically not the Physician that writes the Medical Cannabis Recommendation. The recommending Physician's role is typically only to review the Patient's medical records to determine if they genuinely have a qualifying condition – not to treat the Patient's Qualifying Condition.
- Expand the List of Recommenders: Ohio only allows MDs and DOs to recommend medical marijuana. Ohio could add Nurse Practitioners or any other medical professional that can recommend Schedule II drugs to the allowable recommenders. Most major hospital systems will not allow their Doctors to participate, and this is the only way to expand the list of Recommenders.
- Reciprocity: The State of Ohio allowed Reciprocity for Ohio Patients to go to Michigan to purchase products, but we do not allow anyone to come into Ohio Medical Cannabis Program to purchase our products. According to Cannabis Business Times, Michigan made over 2.2 Billion dollars in 2022! I heard through a reliable source that Michigan made at least \$100,000,000 off of Ohio Medical Cannabis Patients, which is ridiculous! According to the Ohio Medical Marijuana

Control Program site, Ohio has made just over 1 Billion dollars with the program being operatable for 4 years. Not to add, Michigan University Football team destroyed OSU Football this year . . .45-23. I don't hate Michigan but come on! We have neighboring States like PA and Kentucky. PA again, does not sell Edibles but has approved Autism as a Qualified Condition. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, in May 2022, they had a reported 712,421 Patients since there program has been signed into law on April 17th, 2016 right before Ohio.

- Employment, Housing and Parental Rights Protections: Even in an at-will state Medical Cannabis Patients should be afforded the same rights as Patients using other Schedule II drugs. I know and have tried to help a couple of Mothers in Ohio who have lost their children in the court system. Those Mothers were trying to raise their children without their fathers in their life. Some of them were dealing with custody issues, but they were honest about being Medical Cannabis Patients in Ohio and lost their children in the process. Some of those mothers can't cope with life and don't have the resources and support to understand the laws and have went back to using opioids, just so they do not have to be penalized for being a Medical Cannabis Patient.
- Exempt Medical Cannabis from Sales Tax: Medical Cannabis should be treated like any other prescription medication and should be exempted from sales tax. In Ohio, medical marijuana is subject to state, county & local sales taxes adding at least 5.75% to every sale.
- Eliminate the Confusing 90-Day Supply System and Increase the Cap: Ohio's program is confusing for patients and unlike any other in the country we sell in 10th of an ounce increments rather than 8th ounce increments, leaving Patients feeling shorted. Ohio also has one of the lowest purchasing caps at 9 ounces every 90 days. In Michigan, adult use dispensaries cap transactions at 2.5 ounces per transaction. Michigan's medical marijuana program caps patients at 10 ounces per month. Neighboring Pennsylvania does not have a cap and allows the pharmacist at a dispensary to determine the appropriate cap based on the patient's condition and history. For patients with higher tolerance levels, Ohio's program is simply not a solution because our cap is so low.
- Also, do you know that Pennsylvania does not sell any Medical Cannabis edible products? I will get back to this point.
- Add Anxiety, Depression and Insomnia to the List of Approved Conditions: The Physician's discretion to recommend for any condition in SB9 is a helpful change, but likely won't significantly impact the number of patients registered in Ohio's program. Physicians will likely be afraid of sanctions from the State Medical Board if they overstep a line that is not clearly drawn. Likely, they will default to the existing list of conditions or conditions that are very similar. Adding these three specific conditions will protect physicians and patients by signaling that these conditions are approved.
- Also, if you are fans of the Browns, Cavs or OSU Football, all 3 of these conditions are a direct result of these conditions, for sure, lol!
- Remove OARRS Tracking: Many patients continue to purchase marijuana in the illicit market or from adult use programs because they don't want to be registered in OARRS or discriminated

against for their medical marijuana use. Many patients discontinue purchasing in the medical program when they learn their purchases are tracked in OARRS.

- Education Campaign: The MMCP should initiate a communications/marketing campaign to educate Ohioans about the Medical Cannabis program.
- Diversity and Inclusion: We need to discuss how Minorities can have opportunities in the Cannabis industry. There is a huge lack of Diversity and Inclusion in the Cannabis industry as a whole. Diversity is the key to success in every industry, especially this new and upcoming industry. It is so many things we can discuss. I would love to meet offline.
- Clarification of Guns Laws and being a Registered Patient in the Program: I have not read any law that clarifies if you can become a Medical Cannabis Patient in Ohio and have the Right to Bear Arms. With the Gun Laws that have changed recently in Ohio, people are still hesitant on if they are stopped or in any situation that if they have both licenses will they or will they not be arrested for both possessions. I feel this needs to become an education campaign coming from the State.

In conclusion, I am here to oppose Senate Bill 9. We have 200 licenses issued in Ohio. We need more Patients and Patients need Freedom, protection, resources, education and support. Help the industry support the growth of Ohio Medical Cannabis Program, which will help the State of Ohio economic growth and move into the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you or the committee may have.