

**Ohio 135TH General Assembly
Senate General Government Committee
Proponent SB9/Sub Bill Revise Ohio Medical Cannabis Program
May 16, 2023**

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking member Demora and members of the Senate General Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony before you today regarding SB9 and its proposed sub bill language, a revision to the Ohio Medical Cannabis Program.

My name is Tim Johnson, I am a program advocate and a patient and veteran advocate. In December of 2015 I began working with several Ohio legislators with a goal to create a medical cannabis program in Ohio. The intent in creating such a program was to provide an alternative healthcare choice and protected legal access for medical cannabis patients of Ohio through a fair, regulated and safe medical cannabis program. In June of 2016 HB523 signed into law. The program in its regulatory procrastination took over two years to promulgate the infrastructure rules. One of the rules was for legislators to revisit the program every third year and for the betterment of the program revise the rules where needed. In 2021 SB261 was created as the first revision attempt which died in committee at the end of 2022. Now here we are in 2023, four years later still attempting to pass the first program revision with SB9 and its sub bill.

For the last four months several hearings have been held and testimonies have been heard from opponents, proponents and interested parties. The bill appears to be at a stalemate at this time until an appeasement revision for all is accepted. We have heard much criticism and have heard many challenges to the bill focusing on expansion language. We have heard few solutions to remedy this section of the bill. I must acknowledge language in the revision bill presenting positive advancements for the program in fairness. I applaud permitting Doctors to be doctors, adding conditions, reciprocity, no more patient fees to the Ohio Board of Pharmacy, CTR Doctor visits to once every three years and more.

It is apparent that the increased canopy space for cultivators and the addition of more cultivation, processing and dispensary licenses is a problematic focus point. At this time the program does not warrant the addition of more licenses to be awarded, especially under a biased application award system. With cultivators less than fifty percent operational, the opening of five more cultivators, two more processors and two dispensaries under the original application award process are still pending, as well as another fifty plus dispensaries (under the RFAI) to open by the end of the year. This presents a signal that the program has no need to expand its manufacturing of products currently. As well the loss of some 170k participating patients further signals more products are not needed and that patients are not satisfied with the current system and its lack of patient protections.

While SB9 proposes the addition of more cultivator and processing licenses to a select few, we must ask is this necessary. The aforementioned statement says NO. There is however an avenue to visit under the current rules permitting cultivators to expand as the Ohio Department of Commerce sees fit. To redact this rule and to permit Tier 1 cultivators to expand their canopy space to 100K square feet (at their discretion) and to

permit Tier 2 cultivators to expand their canopy space to 25k square feet (at their discretion) permits the cultivators to evaluate and meet the need as they see an increase in demand for products. This language is simple business economics 101, supply v demand.

While patients are recognized as the demand of the program we must share solutions on retaining their participation in the program. As we are aware of the state up north and surrounding states on the verge of adding Adult Choice programs, Ohio must act now to retain the financial values and to improve patient protection rights through criminal justice reform. Let's address the facts on patients and employees being stopped by law enforcement and having their person and vehicle searched because of the cannabis odor, child custody rights as a patient, probation consumption rights as a patient and more. The presented facts of our courts not recognizing the program, Law Enforcement agencies not aware of the program, medical disciplines not aware of the program presents a participation problem for many who wish to be patients. Through educational outreach we must inform and update these Ohio systems as they play major roles in the programs ethical success.

In revising the program let us not forget to address the unwarranted taxes patients pay for a state program recognized schedule 2 medication, the exorbitant fees licensees pay for yearly renewals, environmentally friendly packaging and CEU's for the sciences of the program to name a few.

Building a sustainable medical cannabis program in Ohio is of utmost importance for the program to survive. Licensees, patients, regulators and law makers all play a significant role in preparing Ohio's medical cannabis program for the influx of an inevitable Adult Choice program coming to Ohio soon.

Tim Johnson

Tim Johnson

Founder/CEO

614.736.1861

timj.cannabissafetyfirst@gmail.com