

## TESTIMONY

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Brian Soderston. I am a 61 year old Ohio resident, and have been a lifelong cannabis user. I am currently the Secretary for NORML Appalachia of Ohio, the local chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. I strongly support Senate Bill 261.

I currently use cannabis medically to treat chronic back and hip pain, arthritis, severe depressive disorder and anxiety. I weaned myself off of two pain medications, and three mental health medications, All had major side effects that I was no longer willing to accept. All of these pharmaceuticals were paid for by state funded Medicaid. I no longer have unbearable pain (it's manageable), I have lost 70 lbs of the 150 I had gained (weight gain is one of the aforementioned side effects), and all symptoms of depression, anxiety and sleep disorder are manageable. All of this is due to the use of the proper, (for me), CBD and THC levels in cannabis. Unfortunately, I only receive 784 dollars each month in SSI benefits so, after paying my bills and living expenses, I am unable to afford our Medical Marijuana Program although I am qualified. The high initial costs involved in getting a card along with very high dispensary prices put legal access out of reach. I'm sure I'm not the only Ohio resident in this situation.

This brings me to my reason for testifying today. I would like to thank you for considering SB 261. Eventually the changes included in this bill will lower dispensary prices by increasing the supply of medicine. This can be a huge step forward for Ohio in regards to patient access. You can make a real difference in the lives of patients. Ohio has been slow to change, but progress is being made. We have a chance now to change policy in a way that can be an example to the rest of our country.

In addition, although it isn't included in this bill, we need an adequate homegrow allowance. Without a homegrow provision our medical program is pretty much useless to many veterans, and those on SSI or SSDI. As someone who has grown in the past, I know that the overwhelming majority of people will not take the time, spend the money on lights, nutrients, etc., or expend the energy to learn how to grow cannabis. Those that do will have the experience necessary to do it properly, safely, and in a healthy manner.

Additionally, patients shouldn't have to decide between a medical marijuana card and keeping a CCW permit. Parental rights need to be protected, marijuana use alone should have no bearing on whether someone is considered a fit parent. We should also be given employment and housing protection. These aren't even issues when it comes to pharmaceuticals, and they shouldn't be an issue when it comes to medical marijuana. The positive things about cannabis use include decreased opioid prescriptions, hospitalizations, and overdose deaths, lower health care costs in general and Medicaid in particular.

Finally, as in all my communications, I would like to provide a quote from a great American.

"Prohibition... goes beyond the bounds of reason in attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation, and makes a crime out of things that are not crimes. A prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded." Abraham Lincoln - 1840

I ask you to consider my testimony and give your support to, and vote yes on, this bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.