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Government Oversight Committee
SB261 medical cannabis program

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, and Ranking Member Brown

Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony to SB261, an amendment for the betterment of the Ohio medical cannabis program. My name is Tim, I'm an Air Force Veteran and retired Law Enforcement Officer. I have personally been involved with the creation of the Ohio Medical Cannabis Program from co-authoring the white paper, in 2015, leading to the creation of the program to participating on the Interested Parties Panel that lead to the creation of SB261. The original intent of the medical cannabis program was to provide an alternative valued medicinal route, other than big pharma RX meds, for patients with various physical and mental illnesses and to address the criminal justice reform issues around the use of cannabis. The program language provides for the review of the program and its progress in every third year to adopt or revise language for the betterment of the program, thus the creation of SB261.

While SB261 may share its own shortcomings, it does provide changes to provide positive improvements in the safety and security sectors of the program, expansion of cultivation for the purpose of meeting certain product profiles and a larger product demand as more patients participate, permitting Doctors to be Doctors and the patient Doctor relationship to remain privileged, the expansion of potential vertical integration for some stand alone licensees, marketing rights and product safety testing improvements.

The potential changes SB261 presents has created an internal domestic implosion with the licensees battle over who will have more control or dominate the program with their products as their own testimonies share in their displeasures. These issues can be worked out. In the meantime patient protection rights have been deferred in the bill.

You have heard and been provided the opponent testimonies from those not interested in making the program safer, taking control rights from regulators and not favorable to the program

expansion. In my review of these testimonies I saw input from crime rates increase, children ER visits, driver impaired stats, gateway drug theory, property values decrease, and more. To enlighten you on such articles I would request your review of the archived testimonies presented in the program creation that share a preponderance of evidence to science based articles, studies, peer reviews and research which debunked these unfounded claims. Yes we often hear the defense that there are no studies. If that were to be true then where did the studies come from which the opponents present? Reality is simply because cannabis is a schedule 1 drug under the CSA does not mean it has not been studied. Cannabis is actually the most studied plant in the world with thousands of research articles, studies, tests and peer reviews covering its medicinal efficacy. Perhaps it is not about the proclaimed dangers of the plant but rather about the monetary losses to the justice system, monetary losses to law enforcement and a loss of patients needing the services of behavioral sciences disciplines.

My concern with SB261 is the lack of criminal justice reform policies or better known as patient protection rights that have been omitted. The program as a whole has failed to provide proper protections for patients from; child care, child custody, driving impaired, employment, banking services, insurance, housing, reciprocity, probable cause, economic equity and various minor criminal offenses often piled onto a possession charge. Let us remember the cannabis industry was declared an essential business and the participants were declared true medical patients in the onset of the covid pandemic.

I will not bore you with the history of cannabis, though it is very interesting to hear the truths, but I will ask this, when in our history was cannabis ever declared a public health crisis or a public criminal crisis with supportive proof? The promulgation of criminal laws regulating cannabis has shown to create the issues we have today. The lies of cannabis have been solidified with the truths. It's time we stop insulting our own intelligence to this topic and address issues that truly have a pejorative impact on families, individuals and society as a whole.

Thank you for your time and I am willing to address any questions.

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