

To the members of the Judiciary Committee:

I was present last week when Matt Simon and Laura Subin talked about marijuana "prohibition" and the unfair impact on low income and minority Vermonters. According to their testimony, these folks are unfairly targeted for tickets and are less able to pay the fines.

What they are not talking about is the other side of the civil rights situation, where low income and minority citizens are unfairly targeted for commercialization and increased use. In Denver, there are neighborhoods where there is one marijuana business (medical dispensary, outlet, or grow facility) for every 47 people. Such neighborhoods are overwhelmingly low income and minority. We know from our own experience with alcohol and tobacco that outlet density is highly correlated with higher use of the products. Commercial Cannabis knows this, and they are seeking customers. In these neighborhoods residents are closer to a cannabis shop than they are to a grocery store or school.

With decriminalization, the courts and jails are not filling up with marijuana violators. With Cannabis for Symptom Relief, patients who need medical marijuana can legally acquire it. What is the rush to make it fully legal, call it "recreational," and normalize the use of yet another potentially addictive, often harmful, psychoactive drug? We have the ability to observe what happens in other states and we should take the time to do that.

Please consider the needs of this vulnerable population in your deliberations. Here is an article from the Denver Post that discusses this problem.

http://www.denverpost.com/marijuana/ci_29336993/denvers-pot-businesses-mostly-low-income-minority-neighborhoods

Thank you.

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