

April 7, 2016

Re: Legalization of Marijuana in Vermont

Dear Members of the VT House Judiciary Committee:

- Rep. Maxine Grad, Chair
- Rep. Willem Jewett, Vice Chair
- Rep. Thomas Burditt, Ranking Member
- Rep. Charles Conquest
- Rep. William Frank
- Rep. Martin LaLonde
- Rep. Marcia Martel
- Rep. Betty A. Nuovo
- Rep. Barbara Rachelson
- Rep. Vicki Strong, Clerk
- Rep. Gary Viens

cc: Representative Patsy French, Representative Marjorie Ryerson and Senator Mark A. MacDonald

We write as citizens of Vermont to express our support to legalize Marijuana in the state. Having watched S.241 move from the Senate to your committee in the House, we have observed as you have deliberated and listened to concerns that have been raised about the safety (children access, highway issues) and complexity of building an infrastructure for legalization. While we respect your careful deliberation we feel it is important to highlight why we believe in legalization and why we would ask you to take a bigger view of the issue and consider how the House can influence and change S.241 in a way that addresses your concerns, but also legalizes cannabis for Vermonters.

We both believe that now is the time for Vermont to legalize a substance that many of us use already. We agree with regulation, not prohibition. Much like alcohol, we see a win-win for the state that will support those of us who use cannabis, provide revenue for the state, and still protect our children. Specifically, we believe your current approach:

1. Is too conservative. We are concerned that your approach to either block S.241 or present an alternative that “studies” legalization but does not legalize ignores both the will of the people of Vermont and the economic benefits of legalization. We would urge you consider how you can legalize and provide an appropriate timeline (similar to S.241) to allow the state to create the infrastructure

while at the same time providing a regulation structure that provides access, supports home grown, protects our children and has the appropriate safety measures.

2. Ignores the health benefits of cannabis. As individuals who struggle with autoimmune disorders that are not covered under our current “medical marijuana” law, we both have found that cannabis has a positive impact on our symptoms. Time and time again individuals around the world have highlighted that there are many positive impacts of cannabis. It is time to regulate so those of us who can benefit the most will have legal access.

3. Puts Vermonters at risk. Individuals who choose to smoke pot are currently forced into the shadows, getting access through illegal and often dangerous channels which expose them to other more dangerous substances. Delaying legalization continues to put hard working people in jeopardy, having to trust nefarious drug dealers rather than being able to walk into a regulated and safe establishment to purchase their pot.

We believe that the House has an opportunity to BUILD on what the Senate pushed through earlier this year. Rather than dismantle the thinking from your colleagues in the Senate we would ask that you focus on how to improve that legislation by:

- Expanding access to medical marijuana for individuals with autoimmune diseases
- Ensuring that “Grow Local” opportunities exist rather than giving in to corporate interests
- Continue your approach on allowing “home grown”

We urge you to move beyond a “study” and move forward legislation that is meaningful that will move Vermonters out of the shadows.

Sincerely,

Brad Bond and Elaine Young

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