

Patient Testimony/SB9 Proponent

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Good afternoon committee members,

I'd like to thank the Committee for hearing me today as you search for answers in what many consider to be one of the most difficult topics to understand as legislators. Decades of Reefer Madness have muddied the waters of understanding of cannabis. Our federal government has effectively obstructed research and proponents of medicinal cannabis haven't always done our due diligence in presenting our case to the point that you come to understand medicinal cannabis as we do. We hope to change that this year.

My name is David Mulford. I'm a disabled 56 year old Hutchinson resident, father, grandfather and activist. I have a long history of debilitating, sudden onset and as of yet unknown origin muscle spasms that eventually led to an event which was subsequently diagnosed as Cardio Vascular Spasmodic Angina at the University of Arizona Medical Center in Tucson. Sometimes these spasms were in my chest, sometimes my abdomen and sometimes my extremities. I never know where they'll strike next. I've tried every available prescription to exhaustion and every home remedy I thought might possibly work, but to no avail. My physicians have literally and figuratively given up hope of finding out what is behind this condition.

In addition to the spasms I also suffer from chronic pain. I have several massive ventral hernias due to my refusal to stop working following an Aortobifemoral Bypass in March of 2001. I am a Type 2, insulin-dependent diabetic with severe diabetic neuropathy in both legs. I have severe Carpal Tunnel Syndrome in my hands, Peripheral Arterial Disease and congestive heart failure. I could go on but I think by now you understand I am not in good health by any means. I've died twice on the operating table, nearly died on several other occasions and was told by my surgeon following my surgery in March of 2001 that "I wouldn't make any long term plans if I were you. From what I saw while I was inside you it doesn't appear as if you have more than 18 months left" to live. Sobering news if there ever was, wouldn't you agree?

I cannot take opioid based pain medications for several reasons and often find myself fighting allergic reactions when taking other pharmaceutical medications. I consider this as living my life on the edge of a sword, with one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel! Nothing is promised except death. I take nothing for granted. Still there are times when the pain and spasms reach an unbearable point and I think to go on would be more objectionable than if it ended forever. Yet, in those moments there is one hope...and that hope for me is cannabis.

Where no other medication worked, there was cannabis. It stopped the spasms nearly instantly and subdues the pain I live with not to exclusion, but to a point that I can deal with it. It makes sleep a possibility and life certainly worth living. I can enjoy time with my family and friends and I'm even able to hold down a part time job. I am a valued, useful member of my community when I'm able to medicate with cannabis and a recluse when I can't. I credit cannabis to a large degree with being alive today.

Over the course of the next day or so you be hearing from esteemed members of our community that do not believe that cannabis should be legalized as a medication. Some of these people are physicians with long standing reputations as outspoken opponents of Compassionate Care measures such as SB9 and HB2011. Yet, each has a significant financial stake or professional image to uphold in maintaining prohibition. Patients do not. We are patients and the people who support them. We are suffering patients and people who are tired of being persecuted and caged because we wish to live a better quality life.

One of the most disingenuous statements you'll likely hear is if we pass SB9 then kids will have a much greater access to marijuana. Some may argue that studies have shown more kids use marijuana if it is legalized for medical purposes. These statements are completely false. In fact, the Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research (CMCR) report details that in states where medicinal cannabis has been legalized, the incidence of children accessing and using marijuana either stayed the same or decreased. This is something that couldn't be said in states which did not enact medicinal cannabis measures. Indeed, if you look closely at the studies our opponents chose to refer to and understand what is fundamentally wrong with their assertions, which is, there exists a significant difference in reporting criteria between before and after medical cannabis measures were passed. For example, prior to passage of California's Proposition 215 when a person under 18 showed up at the emergency room following an accident, the hospital didn't always take a blood sample to test for the presence of marijuana. If they did, it wasn't required by law to be reported and was up to the physicians' discretion in most cases. Only after passage of these measures were hospitals, clinics and physicians required to report to law enforcement whenever a positive marijuana test was encountered. It was at this same time that all juveniles newly convicted of marijuana possession were forced into mandatory drug treatment. Thus, we have what appears on the surface to be an exploding juvenile use of marijuana when in reality we have increased reporting.

In essence, we have laws all over this country that are based solely on "worst case scenario" as it relates to marijuana. Hype and hyperbole have taken the place of reasonable and conscience thought. We have at least one notable opponent physician that regularly testifies at these hearings who often appears to act more like Nancy Grace than she does at times. In a discussion where the lives of so many are negatively affected by prohibition, there is no room for sensationalism or misinformation. Only truth, honesty and deliberation with the understanding that a patient's desire to engage in a life involving less pain and fewer side effects outweighs the financial security of those who oppose us.

In closing, I liken the prohibition of marijuana to a runaway train on a rickety track. It's only a matter of time before we encounter a train wreck of biblical proportions. We're very close right now and the repercussions will be disastrous for all of us. Prohibitionists such as Dr. Eric Voth have long had their hand on the throttle of this train and we've seen the results: a failed drug war that has cost us trillions, the highest incarceration rate in the world, the certain infringement of our civil rights and unnecessary death and suffering, all while others profit from our pain. I believe it's past time that we slow this train wreck down and maybe find another track to run on. We can take a major step in doing so by passing SB9. Please join us in returning the decision making process back into the hands of doctors and the patients. Politics has no business determining who suffers and who lives, only God has that right. Thank you for your time and understanding as you deliberate this measure.

Sincerely,

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