

13 March 2019

Dear Chairman Suellentrop and Kansas elected officials,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding Kansas Senate Bill 113 (KS SB 113) as a proponent with all amendments submitted to this bill by co-sponsor Cindy Holscher.

My name is Cody Freeze. As far as my background goes, I am an independent pharmacist and beef-cattle farmer. I received my BS Chemistry degree from Pittsburg State University in 2009, and my Doctor of Pharmacy degree from The University of Kansas School of Pharmacy in 2011. After graduation, I became licensed to practice pharmacy in both KS and MO. I have practiced pharmacy in KS, working up the ranks from technician in 2007, all the way to pharmacist, pharmacy owner and operator. I have been a licensed pharmacist in both KS and MO since 2011. In school and shortly after, I worked for two large chain retail pharmacies, before managing and subsequently owning two pharmacies in the Pratt, KS and St. John, KS areas. My wife is also a licensed pharmacist, and we are owners and operators of a KS hemp startup named Inspuro, LLC. I have also served on the KS Hemp Advisory Board since 2018.

I became involved in cannabis and hemp when patients began asking questions I couldn't readily answer. As an independent pharmacist (or pharmacist in general), I am asked referential questions on a daily basis. When patients kept asking me about CBD (i.e., cannabidiol) products, I discovered I knew little about the subject matter. This is not a common part of the pre-pharmacy or KU pharmacy coursework. This was a problem. I then buried myself in self-study, reading everything I could about cannabis and hemp. After the research, I began finding inconsistencies within products and labeling. I tried several CBD products myself on the market in KS at the time, and decided to make my own formulations for my own consumption. This success led to others wanting to try "my brand" and the creation of the entity Inspuro, LLC. As CEO of the company I work on a daily basis with patients to help them find the right product, route of administration, dosage and speak with them regarding the product's potential drug-interactions. I started this company out of my pharmacy in Pratt, KS. It is currently located in Pittsburg, KS.

This has become a passion for me. With this new-found passion, I have tried to teach as many others about cannabis as I can. This includes speaking with not just patients and customers. I have spoken to the KS Board of Pharmacy with an educational lecture on the human endocannabinoid system (ECS) in the spring of 2018, and to local and regional physicians, prescribers, pharmacists and nurses since 2017. I am very passionate about teaching others who want to learn about cannabis, as well as its role within the human ECS. Keep in mind the human ECS is a system we only discovered in the late 1980s. This is a very, very new and exciting field of study!

I testify before you with purpose because I believe the future of cannabis in KS is potentially a very strong one. I believe it is time for me to speak up and say my part. Because I work in healthcare along with many physicians, pharmacists, nurses and patients, perhaps I can provide a unique professional perspective of why I support the passage of medical cannabis legislation. As a pharmacist, one of the main hindrances with patient compliance any treatment or therapy regimen is high cost. I believe medical cannabis legislation is appropriate for KS because it will allow for safe, regulated access to those who need it most. The pitfalls of handling cannabis as solely pharmaceuticals are obvious. Third party reimbursement (if at all) through insurance companies will likely be nonexistent initially. The cost of approving and testing new drug therapies are very high, and the return on investment for the drug companies often cost patients thousands. I see this in the pharmacy literally every single day, and multiple times every single day. With whole plant cannabis, and safe patient access, I estimate this cost will be a small fraction of what it would be if cannabis/hemp is handled as a pharmaceutical.

With my own self research and time spent in the subject of cannabis and hemp, I have met many individuals struggling with opioid addiction. Cannabis and hemp oriented therapies really can help. I have seen it personally so many times with my CBD patients. There now exist what I would consider well-constructed studies showing safe access to medicinal cannabis decreases overall opioid-related mortality. Not only can CBD and other cannabinoids decrease the craving for opioids, they can help with many symptoms of diseases, both acute and chronic. Medical Cannabis can also do this with a wide margin of safety as whole plant products. Lots of my patients are already using cannabis or hemp products, although self-reporting to healthcare professionals is definitely lower than actual usage. With change in the public's thinking and perception, knowledge, and education is of paramount importance. Stigmas are being broken down into public education regarding cannabis use. Although I believe healthcare professionals are in a great, unique position to provide cannabis care, with a more open approach to handling cannabis as a whole plant product, I strongly believe it will allow for more folks to access the product at a lower cost. I believe that everyone working together focused on gaining knowledge and sharing expertise will lead to a successful medical cannabis program. Passage of legislation will give us an opportunity to regain lost revenue to bordering medicinal cannabis states with active or progressive cannabis and hemp laws. Medicinal cannabis is a huge economic opportunity. There was a time when Kansas grew more hemp than any other state in our great Nation. Farmers will enjoy a new commodity crop, as well as increased diversity with this low-water requirement crop. As drought and climate continues to be a difficult variable, as a farmer myself, I know another crop option in the rotation is a positive thing.

A medical cannabis bill may also lead to research opportunities in our great state. We must change this with education and our own KS-based research. KU pharmacy is in a great place for this with their emerging research on drug and prodrug development. I do not, however, believe it should only be an institutional endeavor, or pharmacist endeavor. The creation of new more targeted therapies will be possible. I do not believe the Board of Pharmacy should solely be regulating cannabis sales. I believe the Department of Health and Environment can oversee any program and give KS patients the safe access they so desperately need. As a Doctor of Pharmacy and licensed KS pharmacist, I also do not believe pharmacists should have sole oversight dispensing medicinal cannabis. Although pharmacists have the background knowledge and patient knowledge to do such very effectively, to my knowledge there is no current specialty education or coursework readily available in an organized setting in KS for them to do this. I have had to dig and look very hard for what knowledge I've gleaned thus far. This is why I have advocated and educated on my own, using research and multiple references I've found, studied in depth. I teach pharmacists, doctors and nurses about these things. I can speak on the subject. The vast majority of those I have educated and consulted with on a professional level had meager initial knowledge. This too will change in time, but initially it is a problem I have encountered when teaching.

I want to build a new industry and become a leader for KS cannabis and hemp. I want KS patients to enjoy safe access to medicinal cannabis overseen by trained medical professionals from all disciplines. We must all do it together, and we must strive to do it "right", with research based knowledge and practice. In order to do it effectively, my support is for the passage of medical cannabis legislation. Thank you all for your time, your public service and commitment to all Kansans.

Best,

Dr. Cody D. Freeze
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Owner and Operator | Freeze Beef Cattle Farms
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