

## Proponent Testimony for Medical Cannabis Legislation--Written Only

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Attention: Medical Marijuana Special Committee

Dear Chairman Olsen and Members of the Committee:

Over the course of your service on this committee, you'll hear all the research and opinions you can stomach. And then some. As a former law enforcement officer turned researcher, I wanted to be one of those people. To stand before this committee and deliver a passionate, statistics-filled testimony about why I believe Kansas should legalize medical marijuana. Instead, let me share with you how I evolved from being staunchly opposed to marijuana to someone who researches, presents, and publishes content on the medical use of marijuana.

I grew up in a cop family, spending my high school volunteer hours helping with the DARE program. I became a cop in Colorado, quickly finding my natural abilities in DUID enforcement. I was *really* good at finding weed and making arrests. I was assigned to a remote area with plenty of opportunities for interdiction. Because I was remote, I had no backup, and it was an hour one-way trip to the jail. I had to be on point and had a perfect track record.

I started to notice patterns during those long transports with the people I arrested. The marijuana users were open to sharing their experiences. The cop in me rejoiced. Confessions made my cases just as bulletproof as my vest. These folks knew so much, so I learned loads more about marijuana than I ever thought possible. This knowledge would be great for promotions and my Drug Recognition Expert credential.

Somewhere in this process I began listening to these folks' stories, not as a cop, but as an inquisitive mind. I started to ask people who legally use marijuana about their experiences. I learned how many people turned to marijuana after failed insurance claims. After being ashamed of their CPTSD and anxiety. After not finding relief for their chronic conditions. These were good people. So many tried to "follow the rules" but were desperate for help.

Their struggle resonated with me as someone who worked in public health and the medical field before becoming a cop. I, too, had dealt with years of misdiagnoses, shotgun medical approaches, and even a life-altering surgery. A surgery that forced my medical retirement from law enforcement.

After being medically transitioned from law enforcement, I chose to complete a Ph.D. in nutrition and pick up where my pre-cop career left off. I quickly rediscovered my interest in people's use of dietary herbs and supplements to alleviate their ails. You know the saying, there's a pill for every ill.

I dug deep into supplement use behaviors, even becoming a graduate teaching assistant. I discovered how people are even more desperate for anything to help them feel well than I ever thought. But these supplements aren't without risk. Many are unregulated or can negatively affect a person's medications or other supplements. So why don't more people know about this?

Then it happened. I asked the question one day if the classic marijuana "chill pill" could help someone who is hypertensive. I was shocked at my research results, that improper use of marijuana by someone with clinical hypertension could be detrimental to their health. And half of the U.S. population is clinically hypertensive, so this is a big deal!

The reality is that marijuana has become more widely accepted than restricted in our country, and people will have access to it no matter what Kansas decides. Moreover, 46% of marijuana users choose to substitute marijuana for their prescription drugs regardless of its legalization status. So why should you care?

Legalizing medical marijuana in Kansas will help bring research and superior-quality marijuana products to Kansans. As a result, people like me can continue academic and medical research to give Kansans a safe pathway to marijuana use to manage their chronic health conditions.

We've all been so desperate to feel better at some point that we would have been willing to pay just about any price at that moment for relief. From buffet food poisoning's relentless borage on our stomachs to COVID recovery. Imagine you live with that desperation every day because the symptoms don't stop. Don't you deserve well-researched, good-quality options for your health? While you may not personally choose cannabis to manage your chronic condition, it's the only option for some people. And they're doing it with or without your blessing because they are desperate to feel well. Do you want to be the person to create yet another barrier to their health?

Thank you for opening your mind and hearing my testimony. I will make myself available for further discussion or to share my research with anyone on this committee interested. Thank you for your yes vote to legalize medicinal cannabis in Kansas.