



Written Testimony in Opposition of S.B. 555
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Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee

Chair Thompson and members of the Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee, my name is Brittany Jones. I am an attorney and the Director of Policy and Engagement for Kansas Family Voice.

At Kansas Family Voice we believe that the government's purpose is to promote good in society and restrain or eliminate things that harm human flourishing. This generally means we are opposed to the expansion of substances and activities that have a proven harmful impact on families and society as a whole. Marijuana falls into this category.

S.B. 555 should not be called a "medical" marijuana bill but instead should be viewed as a trojan horse to allow marijuana to run rampant in our state. The only real limits on this bill are the number of individuals able to procure a license – making this a monopoly but it certainly doesn't mean it's limited. Every nod to making this bill about "medical" marijuana then provides an easy work around for the industry. Further, the purported limits on the percentage of THC for certain products are contradicted by other sections of the bill. These limits are still far too high for what is supposed to be a limited "medical" bill. We do not believe this is good for Kansas families or our state as a whole.

Some background notes on the federal regulation as they stand. Marijuana is classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act.¹ Schedule I drugs have the highest potential for abuse and severe psychological dependence. The DEA considers marijuana to have no medical use and to have "a high potential for abuse."² This makes it incredibly difficult for a state to create a truly medical approach to marijuana and means that this bill is thumbing its nose at federal law.

As a pro-family group our main concerns center around this bill's impact on children and especially babies in the womb. Studies show that infants exposed to marijuana in the womb suffer from neurocognitive and neurobehavioral deficits that persist throughout adolescents.³ We're seeing an increase in use in states where it is legalized, especially as women begin to view it as safe.⁴ This means that more babies than ever are being exposed to marijuana.

But the perceived safety that follows legalization leads many women to believe that it is safe to take while pregnant. Marijuana use among pregnant women increased

¹ Department of Justice, <https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Gnofam, M., Impact of marijuana legalization on prevalence of maternal marijuana use and perinatal outcomes 37 AM J PERINATOL 59-60 (2020).

by 62% between 2002 and 2014 in the U.S.⁵ Behavioral abnormalities develop in babies exposed to marijuana in the womb including “hyperactivity, difficulty with executive functions into adolescence, depression even if they are not using, and early adolescent addiction.”⁶ These effects are highly concerning not only for the baby in infancy but also the impacts it could have on the child as he or she grows.

One issue specific to this bill that should be raising alarm bells for those interested in protecting kids is that Sect. 49 does not allow a court to consider use of marijuana under the program when considering whether a parent is fit.⁷ The court is allowed to consider liquor which is legal in all 50 states and under federal law, but not the use of marijuana?

We’re not talking about just choices for adults here. We’re talking about protecting children. S.B. 555 places no limits on the amount or frequency of consumption for a user, meaning that a parent who is a user could be consuming marijuana in a manner that places their child in danger. Yet, a court couldn’t consider it.

Proponents of legalization of marijuana often try to compare marijuana and alcohol, comparisons that often break down, but in this case, they are asking for an exception from that comparison and an exception where it matters most – the safety and security of our children. Courts at the very least should be able to *consider* whether a parent’s use of marijuana places a child in danger.

It should be noted that it is not good governance for the government to seek to benefit off of the harm of its own citizens. As society crumbles so does demand for more government resources which puts an added strain on the limited resources the government already has. This body should not think it’s doing itself any favors by seeking to tax an industry that has caused so many to become even more dependent on the government or that harms our children.

We acknowledge, there are people of good faith on both sides of this issue, but when we are seeing such demonstrated harmful impacts on children, we need to arm our law enforcement with every means necessary to protect Kansas families, not make their job more difficult and not encourage and seek to profit from that behavior.

We should absolutely be looking at solutions for some of the negative impacts we have seen in our society of illegal marijuana usage. Let’s look at better ways to assist law enforcement, local communities, and the church to respond to the growing crisis. We

⁵ Brown, Q., Trends in Marijuana Use Among Pregnant and Nonpregnant Reproductive-Aged Women, 2002-2014, JAMA (2017).

⁶ Finn, Kenneth, The Hidden Costs of Marijuana Use in Colorado: One Emergency Department’s Experience, The Journal of Globale Drug Policy and Practice (2015).

⁷ “[T]he use of intoxicating liquors or narcotic or dangerous drugs of such duration or nature as to render the parent unable to care for the ongoing physical, mental or emotional needs of the child, except that the use of medical cannabis or medical cannabis products in accordance with the medical cannabis pilot program act, section 1 et seq., and amendments thereto, shall not be considered to render the parent unable to care for the ongoing physical, mental or emotional needs of the child.”



believe that legalization only exacerbates and compounds the problems our society is already facing.

Because we need to protect our most precious resource and our future, our children, we ask that you vote down S.B. 555.

Thank you!