

March 28, 2024

Kansas Senate Bill 555

PROPONENT

Written & Oral Testimony Presented by Mike Snyder, LtCol., USMCR (Ret.)

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Snyder, I am a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel having served 22 years, and I am a proponent in favor of SB 155.

I am here today on behalf of the 155,000 veterans in Kansas, and to advocate for each Kansan who has served our armed forces and nation. We serve all for one, and one for all. Today, there's one person contemplating suicide. Today, there's one person taking opioids when they might not need to. So many of my military friends returned to the states from foreign wars changed. Physical issues. Emotional issues. Suicidal. I will not stand by and watch my friends suffer while a few reluctant politicians refuse to hear us out and decide without compromise what is good for our veterans.

There is a gap in our medical regimen. Today in Kansas, when someone is in pain, what do they get prescribed? Opioids. A year ago, I went to the ER for a heart palpitation issue, and they prescribed me aspirin with fentanyl. I wondered out loud, "Fentanyl? The same drug on the news that is causing overdose deaths every single day?" They said it was medical grade, so I guess I should be glad that it wasn't off the street!

What I'm saying is that veterans and so many others don't have the benefit of options. Options like medical cannabis. Not smoked. Not a gummy. Just like any other prescription. Why is medical cannabis an issue? Because half of Americans have used cannabis! They are familiar with it! So we debate it, and we fear monger, and we hear the same tired arguments. "It's a gateway drug." What about alcohol and nicotine? "It makes you lazy." What about millions of successful Americans who use cannabis? "It's dangerous." Is a person more likely to become addicted and overdose on opioids, or cannabis? There's a reason you know the term "opioid epidemic," and there's a reason why you've never heard the term "cannabis epidemic."

We are talking about a new drug that can benefit hundreds of thousands of Kansans suffering from epilepsy, or cancer, or military vets with PTSD. These aren't stoners or druggies, these are REAL PEOPLE who are in pain. They don't currently have the option between using an incredibly dangerous and addictive drug (opioids), or a drug that allows them relief, isn't cripplingly addictive, and doesn't isolate them from their friends and family (medical cannabis).

So many of my veteran friends need this. Why? Because medical cannabis fills a gap for veterans and patients. It is a lesser evil to opioids. Opioids kill. No one has ever OD'd on medical cannabis. In fact, our own Kansas Health Institute reported that medical cannabis has been shown to reduce opioid use. So, the real question is, "What is our state's strategy for reducing opioid use?" Why are we so concerned about medical cannabis when Kansans are dying every day from overdosing on a prescribed narcotic that turns patients into addicts?

This is the real issue. What is Kansas' strategy for reducing opioid use, opioid addiction resulting from opioid prescriptions? I have never heard of the legislature taking a stand and voting against opioid use in Kansas. Yet, here we are debating this! A vote against medical cannabis is a vote for continued opioid prescriptions, addiction, overdose, and needless suffering.

Kansas is one of only 10 states that haven't given its citizens the medical freedom to use medical cannabis, and it's time to own up! I've read the bill, and it gives Kansas patients medical freedom while still being a very tight bill that avoids the issues other states encountered with their programs. This bill won't cause Kansas to be like Oklahoma or Missouri, with dispensaries on every corner. Instead, this bill fills an existing gap in patient treatment, and reduces opioid use, addiction and every rotten thing that is happening from opioid pain management.

As legislators, and representatives of the Kansans in your district, you need to know that this issue isn't about fear, or recreational use, or appeasing your voting base:

It's really about reducing opioid prescriptions, use and abuse.

It's about Kansas adopting a smart, stringent policy on medical cannabis.

It's about helping hundreds of thousands of veterans, mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends and family have the medical freedom to choose medical cannabis instead of opioids, along with their doctors.

You should know that I'm not from Kansas. I've lived in New York. I've lived in Colorado. I've lived in Oklahoma. I've lived in Missouri. I chose to settle down in Kansas, because there's something about Kansas. It's wholesome. It... embodies the best about America. Kansas has a common sense about it. Now, I know we're amongst the last of 10 states to take a position on medical cannabis. I believe that our state is wise. We are in the position to learn from all the mistakes made on this issue by other states. And now is the time. We have an incredibly conservative and tight bill in front of us. You really can't

get a tighter bill. Medical cannabis is not going away. We, Kansans, need to take a position on this evolving, new treatment. Let's set the national standard on this issue. Let's be the state others emulate.

I ask you, please overcome the slippery slope fallacies on this issue, and let's pass this bill. It's time for Kansas to set the standard on medical cannabis.

I ask, on behalf of myself and the veterans in Kansas, that you vote YEA on SB 555.

To not vote in favor of this bill is a vote for continued over-reliance on opioids, and all the addiction and needless pain and deaths it brings. Let's establish, once again, why Kansas is the best of America. We sit back, evaluate, and then decide. It's time to decide, fear mongering be damned.

Respectfully submitted,

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