

3/28/2024

- SB555
- Disposition: Proponent
- ORAL in-person Testimony
- Steven Beamer sbeamer@besamewellness.com
- Name of interest represented: Self

My name is Steven Beamer and I am the Vice President of Compliance and Security of BesaMe Wellness, a group of five dispensaries in Missouri. Prior to joining BesaMe in February of 2020, I had just retired from the North Kansas City, Missouri Police Department after serving for 41 years, the last seven as the Chief of Police. I am a graduate of the 184th Session of the FBI National Academy and was President of the Kansas City Metropolitan Chiefs and Sheriffs Association. I have consulted on cannabis facility security system designs in Missouri, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

When voters approved medical marijuana in 2018, I directed the police department command staff to research the impact that cannabis had on other communities where it had been legalized. Obviously, the concern was that legal marijuana would create some issues for law enforcement and public safety. What we learned from other police agencies was that the overall impact was minimal. Crime and violence around dispensaries did not increase with any statistical significance. Those reports that we received in 2019 have proved to be accurate when looking at the experience of medical legalization in Missouri.

The first BesaMe Wellness dispensary was one of the first to open in the Kansas City area in December of 2020. The other four were open by the middle of that year. I can report that we have not experienced any notable criminal activity at any of our locations. We have had some minor disturbances and one theft by an employee. I am aware of three burglaries that have occurred at other dispensary groups in the Kansas City area and a handful in the St. Louis area. However, when considering that these crimes occurred over almost a four-year time frame, the criminal activity is no more significant in this industry than it is for any other type of business operation.

I do believe that effective regulations are critical to maintaining a low crime environment in the cannabis industry. While most cannabis groups want to maintain a safe secure facility, regulations that mandate certain architectural requirements, full camera coverage, comprehensive alarm systems, and security training for staff will help ensure that criminal activity is minimal. While it is impossible to prevent all crime, designing facilities that make it very difficult for criminals to be successful in their efforts is a strong deterrent.

One of the concerns for the cannabis industry is internal theft or diversion of regulated products. Once again, building strong regulations with an effective seed-to-sale tracking system is the best method to deter internal theft. By monitoring the status of the marijuana from the time it is a seedling until the last gram of the final product is sold, facility managers and state regulators can determine if everything is compliant and accounted for. Employees may be tempted to steal, but if they know that they will likely be caught and suffer the consequences, the chances of them actually making the attempt is significantly reduced.

I believe that there is a need for people to have access to medical marijuana. I have observed a wide cross-section of the population inside our dispensaries and talked to many of them who have benefitted from cannabis. Personally, my wife used medical marijuana while undergoing cancer treatment in 2021 and I witnessed the effectiveness that it had with her pain management. The legalization of medical marijuana allows individuals to obtain the needed products in a way that is safe. They don't have to attempt to purchase it in nefarious ways, they know that it is safe and has been tested, and they have dispensary staff who can advise them on the best methods from consumption.

I urge the committee to recommend approval of this bill so Kansas residents can benefit from medical marijuana.