



Opponent Written Testimony on Senate Bill 555
Senate Federal and State Affairs
Kerry Gooch – Kansas Black Leadership Council
March 28, 2024

Chair and Members of the Committee,

It is our firm position as the Kansas Black Leadership Council to stand in opposition to Senate Bill 555. While it aims to legalize medical marijuana, it fails to adequately address the concerns voiced by Kansans on this issue.

SB 555 falls short in prioritizing the needs of patients requiring access to this vital medicine. Instead, it undermines the potential significance of medical marijuana in Kansas. The bill's restrictive nature makes equitable access across the state unattainable. By limiting the number of permits statewide, it virtually ensures that more urban and densely populated areas, particularly in the northeast, would monopolize permits for production and sale. Consequently, rural communities would be left without access to essential medicine, exacerbating existing healthcare disparities within the state. Furthermore, the bill prohibits the most accessible forms of consumption, such as smoking and vaping, which are also among the most effective methods of benefiting from medical marijuana. These examples underscore how SB 555 fails to prioritize the medical needs of Kansans.

SB 555 ranks among the most restrictive bills nationwide. Such strict medical marijuana policies will only widen the gap between Kansas and neighboring states like Missouri and Colorado, resulting in the loss of substantial revenue for Kansas. As one of only ten states without medical marijuana legislation, including neighboring Colorado and Missouri, Kansas has the opportunity to learn from the successes and shortcomings of other states. However, SB 555 overlooks this opportunity. Instead, it paves the way for a monopolistic market, preventing Kansans from participating in cultivation and production and retaining revenue within the state. Despite being labeled as a pilot program, this legislation fails to establish an equitable market that prioritizes both the medical and economic needs of Kansans. SB 555 neglects these crucial aspects necessary for a well-designed pilot program.

In conclusion, SB 555 represents an inadequate effort at establishing a medical marijuana pilot program that fails to address the medical needs or economic potential of Kansas. Therefore, KBLC strongly urges you to vote against SB 555. The criminalization of marijuana has disproportionately affected Black communities and led to the incarceration of numerous Black Americans. When formulating policy to rectify past injustices, we urge policymakers not only to enact equitable policies but also to address the mass incarceration associated with marijuana.



Opponent Written Testimony on Senate Bill 555

Senate Federal and State Affairs

Kerry Gooch – Kansas Black Leadership Council

March 28, 2024