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Written OPPOSITION for SB 555, Creating the medical cannabis pilot program act to establish the medical cannabis pilot program for limited cultivation, processing and dispensing of medical cannabis and medical cannabis products.

TO: Chair Sen. Thompson and Committee on Federal and State Affairs

FROM: Lucrecia Nold, Public Policy Specialist, Kansas Catholic Conference

DATE: March 28, 2024

Dear Chair Thompson and committee members,

My name is Lucrecia Nold, and I serve as the Policy Specialist for the Kansas Catholic Conference, representing the Catholic Bishops of Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent to SB 555.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “The political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially: the protection of security and health, especially with respect to dangers like drugs.” (CCC 2211). Later it states: “The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense. Clandestine production of and trafficking in drugs are scandalous practices. They constitute direct co-operation in evil, since they encourage people to practices gravely contrary to the moral law.” (CCC 2291)

While medical marijuana could be considered a therapeutic drug, several questions remain unanswered to our satisfaction. Are there authentic medical conditions that can only be effectively treated with medical cannabis? Has the medical community tested and ruled out alternative treatments that may be more effective, less expensive and with fewer side effects?

The Institute of Medicine has concluded that *some* components of marijuana may have medicinal uses, but strongly encourages the development of prescription cannabinoid medicines based on those components. The Institute reports: “If there is any future for marijuana as a medicine, it lies in its isolated components, the cannabinoids and their synthetics derivatives.”¹

This is not what SB 555 does. It puts individuals at harmful risk of side effects and abuse.

¹ [Making Sense of Bioethics: Column 156: The Smoke over Medical Marijuana — The National Catholic Bioethics Center \(ncbcenter.org\)](https://www.ncbcenter.org/making-sense-of-bioethics-column-156-the-smoke-over-medical-marijuana/)

Another serious concern is the history of the medical marijuana movement in this country. It is simply disingenuous to ignore the fact that the push for medical marijuana is connected to a broader movement towards legalization of its recreational use. Based on this brief history, it is reasonable to assume that motives for passage of this bill focuses more on positioning Kansas one step closer toward legalizing marijuana for recreational use than for therapeutic reasons.

Here is how Father Tad Pacholczyk, an ethicist with the National Catholic Bioethics Center and holder of a doctorate in neuroscience from Yale, sums up the issue:

“The reality behind medical marijuana is far from the rosy view painted by advocates. Marijuana is not ‘just a plant.’ It is an addictive drug abused in epidemic proportions, inflicting a serious individual and societal toll. Its use as a medicine needs to be carefully regulated through standard scientific oversight and the FDA approval process, not handed over to recreational enthusiasts and opportunistic businessmen. The current practice of encouraging states and municipalities to legalize medical, and then recreational, marijuana, is, in the final analysis, neither reasonable nor ethical.”²

We invite you to review Fr. Tad’s thoughts and concerns detailed in the link below.

In conclusion, there are far too many unanswered questions and deep concerns about medical marijuana. These include, but are not limited to, the danger of increased addictions, mental health issues, increased crime and more.

The Kansas Catholic Conference stands in opposition to SB 555, and we recommend you do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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² [Making Sense of Bioethics: Column 156: The Smoke over Medical Marijuana — The National Catholic Bioethics Center \(ncbcenter.org\)](http://ncbcenter.org)