

Before you vote on HB 2514 or SB 1381 please READ!

To: The Honorable Members of the Illinois Legislature
From: Yesse B. Yehudah
Re: The Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Pilot Program Act
Position: **OPPOSE**

It is not the governments' role to legislate morality or accommodate the privileges of those with special interest. Government is needed to protect and defend the natural boundaries of human behavior, called the law, that keep citizens from causing harm to himself or others. The goal of public policy is to safeguard the means by which society prospers and to give people the tools to become rational, healthy, intelligent, functional and productive citizens.

Testimonies, research, and even scientific data exist to support both sides for and against the legalization of "medical marijuana." The arguments and counter arguments seem endless but they do not go directly to the problem. If we compromise we will end up back where we started, criminalizing addictive and abusive behaviors because we did not foresee the future.

The Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Pilot Program Act" or "medical marijuana" bill is at best a compromise that fails to provide any real answers. There are as many problems for the individual, family, community, law enforcement, health departments, employment practices, legal system and the economy as there are claims about the benefits of smoking marijuana for relief from any medical ailment. There is no such thing as "medical marijuana." There is medicine specifically designed to treat, cure or restore health and there are drugs like marijuana, that are too dangerous, unstable and risky to be considered a medical alternative.

Legalizing marijuana for any segment of the population has no benefits that are compatible with building a sane, sober and thriving society. It only invites more abuse, more addiction and more criminality.

The Illinois "medical marijuana" bill is described as a three-year pilot project. After three years how will we assess the success or damage without a reliable tracking system or any real numbers on the availability, use and abuse of "medical marijuana?" The lack of accountability coupled with unenforceable regulations and unknown variables defines the difference between legislation that is responsible and strategic and that which is irresponsible and reckless.

The drug problem in this country is rooted in a broken economic system that feeds off of faulty character in people, which leads to the abuse of drugs both legal and illegal. We must deal with improving the character of people through prevention education and creating commerce or economics that are not built on exploiting societies problems. To attain these goals we have to break the cycle of treating the symptoms and the fallout of a problem as if they were the cause..

Public policy cannot be successful in solving this problem simply by removing the consequences or legalizing the activity and offering a “bailout” approach. Putting our tax dollars and human resources back into the problem and creating a medical marijuana access, supply and delivery system for patients that claim they need it is doomed to fail. Right now there are increasing numbers of people using and becoming addicted to legal prescription drugs looking for a new “high”. If the laws that govern the use of prescription drugs are increasingly violated how many more violations will occur upon legalizing an illicit drug like marijuana under the cloak of medical treatment?

The idea that marijuana is the best alternative available for medical sedation of physical pain, increased appetite, control of nausea and other ailments defies common sense. We are bombarded daily with commercials about medications for everything from erectile dysfunction to cancer. Surely there are safer synthetic drugs available that are specifically designed to treat the same ailments without creating more problems than it is intended to solve. The kinds of problems that we are talking about are more than inconvenient side effects.

How compassionate is it to provide access to marijuana without assurances, accountability, and protections? There are drugs that offer promises of curing deadly and debilitating conditions still awaiting FDA approval after years of rigorous research within the confines of laboratory testing and controlled human trials.

Every prescription, as well as every over the counter drug, comes with specific instructions on how much to take, when to take it, how long to take it, and what the dangers may be. Marijuana has no determined dosage levels, potency restrictions, quality control or tolerance levels that would specify when a persons' ability to function normally is impaired. The patient would essentially self-prescribe use of marijuana for a multitude of ailments from terminal illness to anxiety. The patient would determine their own dosage levels, quantity and quality based on where they acquire it with only a cursory approval from a doctor.

This bill will reach far beyond the small segment of the population with terminal illness or people experiencing a medical crisis. Under the guise of helping these

people this legislation proposes to turn the doctor, caregiver and patient into the new drug dealers, growing, dispensing and using marijuana freely. This is still a country that respects privacy laws making it impossible to enforce a limit on how much marijuana a patient or caregiver is allowed to grow and possess in their own home.

Labeling marijuana as a medicine would not only legitimize it, but it would also put one more drug on the open market for abuse by adults and children. As usual it is African American and Hispanic children that are at greatest risk of having their standard of living lowered once more.

Patients will not be required to use marijuana in a controlled setting, which means that they are free to share it amongst their friends who do not have medical approval. Dispensaries would not have quality controls or limits on how much marijuana they can distribute to the same patient or caregiver. Doctor – patient confidentiality rules already in existence prevent law enforcement from being able to identify crimes associated with increased numbers of marijuana users and distributors.

“Medical marijuana” is a recipe for chaos and surrenders to forces that will watch our communities collapse seduced by sedation to pain and unconscious of the future it holds. Most people know all too well the health, social, and economic problems associated with using marijuana. From the brother, son, daughter, or cousin that has already forfeited their future for using, possessing or selling marijuana, to the child that got hooked early and moved on to crack or heroin, it is clear that marijuana is not a medicine or a cure. Who will we blame when instead of life long learners children become life long drug users? Are we really willing to put our children at risk for the ill motives of those seeking to pardon their own use of marijuana under the cloak of medical progress?

Labeling marijuana as a medicine would not only legitimize it, but it would also put one more drug on the open market for abuse by adults and children. As usual it is African American and Hispanic children that are at greatest risk of having their standard of living lowered once more. We already know that marijuana impairs learning, memory, abstract thinking and problem solving, and it can lead to poor attendance, dropping out of school, delinquency and behavioral problems.¹ Greater access whether legal or illegal, government sponsored dispensaries and home grown sources for marijuana open the door for an explosion of people under the influence while driving, at work, at school or just out in public.

There are already too many African American and Hispanic youth, parents and individuals that cannot pass a drug test to even qualify for employment.

The economics of this legislation do not add up any better than the health and social aspects. It is easy to forget that the goal of economics is not to generate money but to create development. Government sanctioned drug cartels made up of mass marijuana dispensaries, medical doctors and patients do not lead to economic development on any level. Eliminating or regulating the profit margin from illogical, ill-moral and illicit activity does not eliminate the ill effects. It magnifies and maximizes the influence of a drug that has been scientifically proven to damage the brain, distort the consciousness, impair judgment, depress physical health and lead to addiction and mental illness in the individual, especially children.

What are the economics of dealing with these problems? The cost would be staggering when you consider the controls that need to be added to prove the study's benefit. What is also a certainty is that there is no benefit in government policies that seek to gain financially from the weakness and degeneracy of its people.

Crime, has increased not decreased in places like California that have marijuana clubs and children readily produce medical marijuana cards to justify possession. We do not have to wonder if legalized medical marijuana for certain segments of the community will cause an increase in drug abuse by the general public including children - it is a certainty and been factually documented.

Current government policies that promote needle exchange and condom distribution are based on the same flawed thinking that is behind legislation to legalize medical marijuana. Now that these policies are in force we have all but forgotten the original intent to decrease the transmission of AIDS. What happened? AIDS among African American women exploded and children are no safer from this disease than before. Protecting the health, interest, rights and needs of people is not something that can be compromised through legislation that allows us to simply look the other way and still hope for the best. We must go beyond the exploitation of people's problems and focus on real solutions.

Desperate economic times and desperate employment situations call for clarity, strength and vision not weak-minded concessions that only serve the preferences, privileges, pleasures or perversities of individuals. This kind of public policy making inherently neglects the greater good. Solutions to the severe problems we face in this country can only come from people who are clear minded, willing to be honest in their understanding and courageous in their actions.

This bill hides behind the notion of helping a small minority of people while at the same time threatening to damage many more lives. What it cannot hide is the fact that when personal preferences are allowed to be the basis for public policy it is an abuse of public trust. It neglects the mandate of every elected official to serve the health, interest, rights and needs of their constituents; men, women

and children. There is no such thing as “medical marijuana.” There is medicine specifically designed to treat, cure or restore health and there are drugs like marijuana, that are too dangerous, unstable and risky to be considered a medical alternative.

Let us grow up and stop playing with our heathy minds to increase the volume of unhealthy mids. Give our children will have a chance to grow up to be rational, healthy, intelligent, functional productive citizens. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Kreamer, Judy; Fields, Gary M. PhD; Stutman, Robert M.; Anderson, Gary L.; Barthwell, Andrea G. M.D., FASAM, The Overlooked Cause Of Children Being Left Behind...Drug Use Compromising Academic Success, Educating Voices, Inc., www.educatingvoices.org.