

Esteemed Representatives of the Judiciary Committee,

The state of Oregon is in serious need of reform to its drug laws. The war on drugs has completely failed at all levels; spending on enforcement of drug laws has been rising every year—an increase of \$20 billion nationally from 1981 to 2001 alone—while drug use statistics have steadily risen in the same time span. This shows that the drug war is ineffectual, and a new solution is needed. We believe that House Bill 3371 is an extremely effective solution.

Rather than locking up every user of cannabis, a much more effective solution would be to legalize and tax marijuana as a commodity, allowing the state to take advantage of taxing what is currently an industry worth \$35.8 billion. Furthermore, a portion of the revenue generated is dedicated to drug abuse education, prevention, and treatment, which has been shown to be much more effective at reducing drug abuse than harsh imprisonment laws. By legalizing cannabis, 3371 would free up an extremely large portion of the law enforcement budget for more important issues such as violent crime, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

By regulating marijuana in a similar way to alcohol and tobacco, 3371 would make it much more difficult for minors to access the drug. A study by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) found that American teens reported that it was easier for them to obtain marijuana than alcohol. This is a direct consequence of prohibition; where a licensed seller would check ID, a dealer has no reason to do so, and dealers only exist because of prohibition.

Much like alcohol can be homebrewed and consumed by adults in the privacy of their own homes, so, too, should marijuana be treated. Most marijuana users are ordinary, hardworking citizens who also happen to enjoy cannabis. There is no reason or need to criminalize them.

We believe that House Bill 3371 is a huge step in the right direction for the state of Oregon. It is cleanly written, well thought-out, and the flaws that made measure 80 unsatisfactory for many supporters of legalization are virtually absent. We urge you to pass this bill.

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