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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3703  
April 2, 2013

The Hon. Jeff Barker  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee,

As a leader in the effort to rethink America's federal marijuana policy, I'm encouraged that you are holding a hearing on House Bill 3371. It is critical that both Oregon state legislators and the general public engage in a conversation about state-level marijuana reform.

I recently co-authored a report with Congressman Jared Polis that researches the history and failings of our marijuana policy, as well as our timely opportunity to retool it for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am attaching it with this testimony.

On a national level, millions of people have been caught up in the justice system for marijuana offenses, and over 660,000 are arrested each year for possession. This is part of the reason why government spending on corrections over the last 20 years has increased at a significantly higher rate than our spending on higher education.

Instead of arresting two-thirds of a million people every year for using something that half of Americans support, we should remove the federal prohibition on marijuana and allow states to develop programs that fit their own specific needs. In those states where marijuana is legalized, the federal government should then tax and regulate it. This would save billions of dollars in enforcement-related costs while also raising billions in new revenue for deficit reduction, substance abuse, and law enforcement. This is a position that conservatives who respect states' rights and liberals who respect individual rights should be able to get behind.

As we continue to work at the federal level on federal marijuana policy reform, now is the right time for action in Oregon, a state with a history of leading the way on this issue. When I was in the Oregon Legislature in 1973, I voted to make Oregon the first state to decriminalize the personal use of marijuana. Given public opinion trends and the recent legalization votes in Colorado and Washington, a conversation about legalization in Oregon now is an important and natural next step.

As elected officials, we can be part of the policy conversation or can risk having it happen at the ballot box without legislative input. HB 3371 is the right place to start that conversation and craft effective policies that regulates and taxes marijuana in a manner both appropriate for Oregon and one that raises money for needed state services. Just as importantly, it sends a message to the federal government on the necessity of adjusting federal laws, building momentum towards effective reform. This a good starting place, and I encourage you to continue the conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl Blumenauer".

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress