

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Cannabis Industry Association, a member-based trade association that works to protect and improve Oregon's cannabis laws to work effectively for the Oregon cannabis industry and as well as our neighborhoods and communities, I urge you to vote "No" on Senate Bill 1531. Allowing localities to outright ban medical marijuana facilities will only hurt our patients, particularly those most vulnerable. Many patients battling the most severe and debilitating medical conditions and those with the lowest income will be unable to acquire medical cannabis, recommended by their doctor and will be forced to seek marijuana on the black market or go without, as they may not be able to travel long distances, cultivate their own medicine or find their own grower.

While many of the fears of those that would like to prohibit medical marijuana facilities are understandable, the evidence has yet to warrant the extreme measure of outlawing medical marijuana facilities. Advocates and those of us within the cannabis industry share many of the same fears and concerns. We want to keep marijuana out of the hands of minors, keep our roads safe from impaired drivers and prevent dangerous crimes as well. In addition to caring about our friends, families and communities, the Oregon cannabis industry also has a vested interest in a well-regulated medical marijuana supply system that alleviates the concerns of Oregon voters and won't invite federal interference. We understand that a poorly regulated system will only garner voter backlash and increase the likelihood that the federal government will intervene. However, we understand that regulation is the key to addressing all of our concerns, not more prohibition.

Just as alcohol prohibition enriched Al Capone and other gangsters, marijuana prohibition enriches drug cartels today. By outlawing medical marijuana facilities, communities won't be eliminating marijuana or the people who buy and sell marijuana. They will only exacerbate problems by forcing too many patients to seek out marijuana from those that may sell other drugs, or even be a violent criminal looking for a vulnerable target. Safe access thru regulated and licensed medical marijuana facilities, on the other hand, will provide keep patients safe from criminals while providing jobs and generating revenue for the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program, a government program that doesn't cost tax payers any money and has provided revenue for the state.

The fears surrounding medical marijuana facilities haven't been proven by the facts on the ground and as everyday Oregonians get more comfortable with cannabis commerce, those fears will soon wash away. Government studies have shown that teen use doesn't sky rocket, even in Colorado. Studies have shown that medical marijuana facilities don't increase crime. In fact, dispensaries are less likely to be robbed than banks. Access to medical marijuana hasn't made our highways any more dangerous as statistics show that medical marijuana states actually experience a decrease in highway deaths. Suicides have gone down in states that have passed medical cannabis laws and Oregon experiences a lower rate in workplace accidents than before voters legalized medical marijuana in 1998.

A recent poll shows that 58% of Colorado voters support regulated marijuana sales, a bigger majority than the 55% that passed the landmark legalization law. It is clear that regulation is the key, not more prohibition, please allow for a well-regulated system to develop and oppose the passage of Senate Bill 1531.

Thank you,
Anthony Johnson
Executive Director, Oregon Cannabis Industry Association
