

Senators Prozanski, Hayward & Steiner
Senate Committee on Business and General Government
c/ o sbgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov
RE: SB 639

Dear members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of SB 639.

Cannabis policy, as you well know, is a complex subject matter. The market is in actuality two markets – medical and recreational – and there is a lot of confusing information and misinformation that might make some Oregon residents fearful of more “easing” of restrictive cannabis regulations. However, when the facts are brought to light, SB 639 proves to be necessary and practical, and won’t enable most of the concerns expressed in opposition.

Users of medical marijuana – let’s call them patients – typically arrive at this medicine after all other medical options have failed them; they stick with cannabis because it works for them. The voters of Oregon along with voter of more than 30 fellow states agreed to give these patients legal access to medicine that works for them. Yet at the same time, other local, state and federal policies, ordinances and laws forbid these same patients the ability to take their medicine, or in some cases, even possess it. The public consumption provisions in SB 639 go a long way to address this problem.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages has historically been both legal and social. Now that cannabis is legal in the State of Oregon, consumers of recreational cannabis are seeking to legally imbibe cannabis the way consumers of wine, beer and spirits do: at bars. Naturally there will be concerns about what a cannabis consumption venue would mean to a neighborhood, to road safety, and for substance abuse. But rather than be cause for concern, the data from legalization supports the establishment of cannabis consumption venues.

Because of the misinformation about cannabis, there are some people who are resistant to more lenient consumption laws. The concerns being voiced now are the same heard before passage of Measure 67 in 1998 and Measure 91 in 2014: more underage use, increases in “stoned driving” arrests and accidents, and increases in crime, to name just a few of the biggest. But thankfully, the results of legalization have not played out the way its opponents feared.

Here are a few points:

- Teens living in US states allowing medical marijuana smoke less cannabis
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/02/190214191934.htm>
- Crime rates across a broad range of categories fell in states with legal medical cannabis
<https://reason.org/wp-content/uploads/does-legalizing-marijuana-reduce-crime.pdf>
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268118300386>
- More data needed on driving while high, but in “legal” states impaired driving still linked to alcohol consumption
<https://www.scramsystems.com/blog/2018/08/in-best-known-pot-state-most-impaired-driving-still-linked-to-alcohol/>

Also, contrary to the belief that cannabis consumption venues lead to more impaired drivers on the road, such venues actually make it easier to police bad drivers, much in the same way bars and events

are policed today. Today, without social consumption venues, cannabis is supposed to be consumed in homes. Logistically, that makes policing for impaired drivers much more difficult by comparison.

Finally, with respect to homes, it needs to be noted that it's not always possible to consume cannabis in a home one doesn't own. Cannabis possession and use is forbidden in federal Section 8 housing, and many lease agreements likewise use different language to prohibit possession and use. Without the availability of cannabis consumption venues, the legal status of medical and recreational cannabis is in effect solely for homeowners, and that certainly was never the intention nor spirit of either Measure 67 or 91.

I urge your vote in favor of SB 639. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

John Sidline
Lake Oswego, OR
Senate District 19