

Dear Committee Members and Representative Blumenauer,

I write today to ask for your support of SB 639 which would designate places to allow adult cannabis consumption. The legalization of cannabis in Oregon has not yet included this vital piece to further eliminate the discrimination of cannabis users.

Legalization has negatively impacted the medical marijuana program to the point of its collapse. Without legal consumption lounges, many patients can no longer use cannabis. For many, it has been the only medication that helps them. Due to federal regulations, the continued stigma that medical cannabis patients endure and public fear, these people end up with no place to use their medicine. This is both unfair and inhumane.

Cannabis has been shown to be less dangerous than alcohol, yet alcohol consumption is allowed everywhere. There is even a bar in my local Fred Meyer store. It's time to treat cannabis the same way we treat alcohol, at the very least. Oregon has been a leader in the cannabis arena; I hope we continue to do so by allowing cannabis consumers safe places to consume it.

I saw an article just the other day that spoke of Alaska's booming cannabis tourism trade. Consumption lounges would allow Oregon to cash in on that tourism as well. They could provide new streams of income for the state with licensing and registration fees. I believe they could also discourage the black market.

As a long time cannabis activist who has supported NWCC and the old world famous Cannabis Cafe , I have seen first hand the positive impact cannabis lounges can have. I saw people helping each other through hard times; the cafe had fund raisers for families that suffered under prohibition. It was a resource center that provided Thanksgiving dinners, clothing swaps and food drives within the community as well as a place that was fun for social activities. It made us feel normal, welcome and like we belonged to something larger than ourselves. Just like everyone else, we deserve that sense of belonging. As medical patients, we deserve a place to safely and legally use our medicine. Please pass SB 639. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sheena O'Rourke