

Date: 3/11/2019

To: The Honorable Chair Representative Lively, Vice Chair Representative Bonham, Vice-Chair Fahey and Members of the House Economic Development Committee

From: Matt Lawson, Wild Flower Farms, LLC

RE: Position statement on HB 2233 related to social consumption

Chair Representative Lively, Vice Chair Representative Bonham, Vice-Chair Fahey and Members of the House Economic Development Committee:

I own an OLCC license for the production of recreational cannabis. In regards to the public consumption of cannabis I view the issue as important to helping strengthen and improve the legal cannabis industry, resulting in an opportunity for public acceptance of its use medically as well as the ability to generate more tourism and tax dollars. Furthermore, I believe a strengthened legal cannabis industry would undoubtedly help alleviate the diversion problem facing the state at the moment. I believe the legal cannabis industry, in Oregon and other states where it is legal recreationally and/or medically, suffers from generally negative public perception. I believe this negative perception stems from decade old stigmas that are still evident today in things like section 280E of the Internal Revenue Service tax code. Due in part to the restrictions created by section 280E (and an over-abundance of cannabis in the market) licensed cannabis producers, as well as other legitimate cannabis businesses, are struggling to operate sustainable businesses. Allowing public consumption of cannabis is a general step in the right direction to bringing cannabis further into the mainstream and doing away with some of those stigmatic perceptions. Moreover, the reputation of Oregon as having some of the world's finest cannabis, coupled with a well-designed public consumption policy, could create a unique domestic tourist attraction that would benefit all Oregonians.

People are increasingly recognizing and experimenting with the health benefits of cannabis, particularly in regards to pain, PTSD, anxiety, cancer and many other chronic illnesses where traditional treatments have failed them, or the drugs prescribed have worse side effects than the issue itself. Individuals who had never considered cannabis use recreationally before are now turning to the plant in many forms to help them cope with and treat their health issues. This form of recreational use can no longer be ignored. The stigma of "using" cannabis in public needs to be altered so that people can comfortably and effectively use cannabis as their treatment if that is their choice. They should not be forced to hide behind closed doors, already suffering from whatever ailment they have.

To be clear, I'm completely in favor of regulating the public spaces and the various methods in which cannabis could be enjoyed. I don't think many people enjoy walking into a smoky bar or restaurant regardless of the type of smoke wafting through the air but there are myriad methods to enjoy cannabis that do not create a smoky environment or the risk of second-hand ingestion. Similar to alcohol and tobacco I think the onus of enjoying cannabis responsibly can and should be placed on the individual.

The best way to strengthen and professionalize the cannabis industry is to help support a domestic and international market that allows business owners to do what the vast majority of other non-cannabis business owners want to do: engage in a free market system that rewards efficiency, a good product,

and the execution of a well put-together business model. Creating a sound public consumption policy is a step in the right direction towards supporting the cannabis industry and changing public perception by taking cannabis from the windowless dispensaries and the closed doors of people's private residences to cafes, restaurants and open spaces.

Matt Lawson
Wild Flower Farms, LLC
541.666.8303
Matt@wildflower.farm
www.wildflower.farm