



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5650, An Act Concerning  
Funding for Literacy and Adult Education Programs in Certain School  
Districts and Municipalities**

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, Ranking Members Martin and Cheeseman, and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5650, An Act Concerning Funding for Literacy and Adult Education Programs in Certain School Districts and Municipalities.

At the ACLU-CT, we believe in the complete decriminalization of cannabis – from cultivation to sale and delivery to possession and use. The failed war on drugs, including cannabis, was a major driver of both mass incarceration<sup>1</sup> and policies that significantly eroded civil liberties.<sup>2</sup> In addition, racial disparities in the criminal legal system are tied directly to the racist history of enforcement of drug offenses in Connecticut.<sup>3</sup> The war on drugs has criminalized many otherwise law-abiding people,<sup>4</sup> who are disproportionately young, poor, and people of color.<sup>5</sup> Black people, particularly, have been harmed by this disparity. In 2010, prior to decriminalization,

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<sup>1</sup> “The War on Marijuana in Black and White” at 4. ACLU (Jun. 2013), *available at* [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> “The War on Marijuana in Black and White” at 91-95. ACLU (Jun. 2013), *available at* [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *See generally id.*

<sup>4</sup> *See, e.g.,* “Marijuana Arrests & Punishments.” ACLU, *available at* <https://www.aclu.org/other/marijuana-arrests-punishments>.

<sup>5</sup> *See generally* “The War on Marijuana in Black and White.” ACLU (Jun. 2013), *available at* [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf)

Black Connecticut residents were three times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than whites,<sup>6</sup> despite similar rates of cannabis use to white residents.<sup>7</sup>

All of these factors make it plain that, when decriminalizing and generating revenue from cannabis, communities harmed by disparate and excessive policing during the War on Drugs need to be prioritized. In addition, incarcerated people, many of whom are there for drug offenses, must receive resources from this new revenue stream. For that reason, directing money toward funding adult education in the municipalities with the highest number of reentering residents is a way to directly reinvest in the communities most harmed by the failed war on drugs. Similarly, funding literacy in Unified School District #1, which provides education to the Connecticut Department of Corrections facilities, is a way to reinvest cannabis revenues into people directly impacted.

The war on cannabis, like the war on drugs overall, was a failure that ruined millions of lives. It has torn apart families and decimated communities, all while acting as a vehicle for racial injustice. Connecticut can begin to rectify these harms by reinvesting cannabis revenues into education for communities and individuals most harmed by creating equity in the cannabis industry. The ACLU-CT thus urges this Committee to support House Bill 5650.

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, “2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables,” at Table 1.32B. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Sept. 7, 2017), *available at* <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016.pdf>.