



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5862, An Act Establishing a Loan Program to Support Cannabis-Related Entrepreneurship for Justice-Impacted Individuals

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 5862, An Act Establishing a Loan Program to Support Cannabis-Related Entrepreneurship for Justice-Impacted Individuals.

At the ACLU-CT, we believe in the complete decriminalization of cannabis – from cultivation to sale and delivery to possession and use. Our support for full decriminalization is strengthened by the racist history of enforcement of cannabis offenses in Connecticut.¹ Laws criminalizing cannabis impose the hardships of an arrest and arrest record, and often prison terms, on otherwise law-abiding people,² who are disproportionately young, poor, and people of color.³ Black people, particularly, have been harmed by this disparity. In 2010, prior to decriminalization, Black Connecticut residents were three times more likely to be arrested for cannabis

¹ 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

² See, e.g., “Marijuana Arrests & Punishments.” ACLU, *available at* <https://www.aclu.org/other/marijuana-arrests-punishments>.

³ 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

possession than whites,⁴ despite similar rates of cannabis use to white residents.⁵ Criminalization of cannabis has been selectively enforced, and this enforcement has relied on entrapment, illegal searches, and other methods that violate civil liberties.⁶

This bill is expressly directed at remediating the past harm to the people targeted by cannabis criminal laws. By providing a loan program for justice-impacted people to access opportunities in the cannabis industry, this bill ensures that the racist legacy of cannabis laws and enforcement does not continue to expand into a profitable and growing industry. Instead of perpetuating and compounding problems, this provision instead starts to address the wrongs of the past and takes a step towards equity for people harmed by the war on cannabis.

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 creating equity in the cannabis industry. The ACLU-CT thus urges this Committee to support House Bill 5862.

⁴ “The War on Marijuana in Black and White” at Tables 7 and 8. ACLU (Jun. 2013), *available at* https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/1114413-mj-report-rfs-rel1.pdf.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ “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