

3-11-2009

Dear Chairman Suellentrop and state of Kansas elected officials,

Thank you for this opportunity to support Senate Bill 113 as a proponent with all amendments submitted to this bill by co-sponsor Cindy Holscher. My name is Cheryl Kumberg. I am a registered nurse and have been a Kansas licensed healthcare professional for 40 years. I am also a certified therapeutic massage therapist in business for 23 years. I worked 29 years in a nationally recognized critical access regional hospital. My nursing background is critical care, acute medical surgical care, nursing management and nursing education. The last two years of my nursing career have been spent on cannabis education and becoming active in the cannabis hemp industry in Kansas. I am currently a board member of the Planted Association a leader in the budding hemp industry here in Kansas. I am also an active member of the National Cannabis Nurses Association.

The purpose of me coming to testify today is to talk with you as a cannabis nursing professional relating why it's important we pass reasonable medical cannabis legislation now. Hopefully after reading this, you will understand that a large number of healthcare professionals across the state are for medical cannabis and we will be silent no more. Included with this letter find supportive signatures or letters of support from physicians, PHD educated practicing nurses, Master prepared nurses, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, Registered Nurses and allied licensed healthcare professionals. (I was unable to get several physician signatures due to them being out of town.) Please note I am one nurse from a small town of 100 people. I had but a short time to gather signatures. I have talked to nurses and physicians over the last 6 months about cannabis issues and I estimate 8 out of 10 are for the passage of a medical cannabis bill.

I am a cannabis nurse. Cannabis nurses are nurses who have received specialized education, passed tests and work in the medical cannabis field. There are several large national cannabis nurses' organizations working with the American Nurses Credentialing Center to create a sub-specialty of licensed nurses. These nurses will have met stringent educational standards and can practice using a nationally approved title. Currently there are 3 large established nursing organizations with thousands of nurse members from across the US. They are the National Association of Cannabis nurses, Patients out of time, and Cannabis nurses Network. Nurses have been able to obtain approved cannabis continuing education hours (CE) from many sources for several years. Approved nursing CE is also widely available from national cannabis conventions and symposiums held across the US and other educational sources such as TCMI. These education hours are recognized by all state boards. Nurses who join a national cannabis organization have standards of practice, codes of ethics as well as a large network of peers for support. They often look over new studies and evaluate their merit as a professional group and are developing cannabis use guidelines. There are hundreds of cannabis nurse educators teaching cannabis related courses and authoring books about cannabis. They run patient focused cannabis clinics, dispensaries, counsel patients and act as patient advocates at the local and state levels.

Medical Professionals who work in the cannabis field rely on scientific data that supports the efficacy of cannabis. New studies are published almost weekly. There is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence that cannabis does help with a lot of illnesses and conditions. Is cannabis for everyone? NO! Because we are all unique individuals, there is no "one" medication or herb that works for everyone. Does cannabis help most with few to no side effects when used properly? YES! Because of racism and greed cannabis prohibition was imposed and that resulted in the US lagging far behind more progressive countries like Israel. Cannabis research there has yielded amazing results because they have been using it as a medicinal herb for decades and are now world leaders in research and use. We must have legal access to promote more studies here. The most important thing for you to remember is that the purpose of using cannabis as medicine is not to become high. It is to function as normally as possible while alleviating problematic symptoms or conditions.

Last fall I attended a national cannabis convention for medical professionals. It was attended by 300+ physicians and nurses from across the US. The physicians realize their patients know more about cannabis than they do and are willing to become educated on the latest research and treatment protocols. Recently the World Health Organization came out with a de-scheduling statement about cannabis. Many other world-wide organizations are also calling for de-scheduling.

Why is it that we here in Kansas think we know better than all the world wide and national health organization experts who are in favor of cannabis use and deregulation? Why do we not listen to experts in the field when judging the positive life changing effects cannabis has for so many users. I think it's time to listen to the studies and pay attention to the polls that have been done showing the majority of Kansans want access to medical cannabis.

What I urge you to do when you look at a cannabis studies shown to you is to ask yourself several questions. Is there any bias from the researchers? Who funded the study, did they use data that is current, or use just collected data that was reviewed to come up with their conclusions, and did they exclude any other factors that could influence the results? For example, you may have seen several studies that were published that indicated that in states with legal cannabis use automobile accidents increased. Upon closer review those study results have been found to be questionable. Included in the statistics were people who were impaired by alcohol and other drugs along with having cannabis metabolites present in their bodies at the time of the accident. The presence of metabolites does not indicate impairment. One cannot conclude that the accident was caused by cannabis alone when other substances are present therefore, the study results are flawed. Also remember to question anyone's intent if they only show negative studies. There are far more positive studies out there than negative. We must also remember that pharmaceutical companies, alcohol and tobacco industries stand to lose a lot of money if cannabis is legal and they are doing a lot of things to discredit cannabis.

There are a lot of justified questions about misuse of cannabis if we legalize for medical use and rightly so. Medical cannabis programs are working well in many other states. Kansas can also have a program that works well with proper legislation. The largest group of new cannabis users are age 55 and up. Cannabis has been shown to help with pain conditions, arthritis, inflammatory and neurological conditions as well as depression. Now that technology allows us to understand the endocannabinoid system and how it works, it is evident that it takes all plant constituents of cannabis plant to work synergistically in our bodies. What we are beginning to see now is that pharmaceuticals made from synthetic THC lose their effectiveness after a period of time. This does not seem to happen with whole plant products. Much more research needs to be done in this area. Cannabis therapy is more appealing to the baby boomer generation because it's use is not new to us. What has changed drastically since the 1970's is the plant itself. Recreational use in the late 60's and 70's destroyed the medicinal qualities of the plant we used and knew about. Consumers demanded plants high in THC. Many new strains were developed to meet that need and we lost some of the cannabinoids that were so important to healing. We also saw more unwanted side effects when cannabis naive users ingested too much THC at once. Lowered blood pressure, nervousness, tachycardia, and paranoid behavior has been noted but is self-limiting and dissipates within a few hours. Without medical supervision recreational users have panicked ending up in the emergency room unnecessarily. Thankfully now there are clinics and nurse manned help lines that offer solutions and support options should consumers take in too much THC. Plant breeders have been working hard for years to regain the older types of plants higher in CBD and other cannabinoids. Using medical cannabis is not about being high, it's about healing.

Passage of a medical cannabis bill should include assurance that Kansas farmers and Kansas business owners will be able to be involved in a new industry. Starting out there must be reasonable license fees associated with all aspects of cannabis from growing to selling products. All Kansans should have the opportunity to have growing sites and provide cannabis to dispensaries if they are willing to educate themselves and invest in the industry. Encouraging a good supply chain will allow for cannabis products to be available when needed. Also, Kansans should have the opportunity to sell cannabis bringing new business opportunities to their communities. Patients should have the flexibility to obtain a cannabis license in a timely fashion not months after application has been made. Providers recommending medical cannabis should have a relationship with their patients but asking for a 2 year wait time to get a recommendation is unrealistic. We are a mobile society, new people enter the state, established providers leave the state, and not all patients are insured allowing them to see a physician on a regular basis for an extended period of time. Healthcare professionals, cannabis sellers, and any persons working with patients must have cannabis education ensuring patients are getting proper supervision and use guidelines. Education requirements must continue on a regular basis ensuring all involved with cannabis keep up with the fast-paced changes that are occurring as new studies come in and guidelines change. The Pharmacy board should not be involved with management of a botanical product. We must be fiscally

responsible and consumer friendly keeping all management of a cannabis program under one department, the Department of Health and Environment.

Lastly, we must pass a medical cannabis bill to reclaim lost revenue. Nebraska has pending cannabis legislation and should it pass, we will be surrounded by legal states. We are currently losing millions to Colorado, Oklahoma and soon to Missouri. Why is it so hard to make the educated decision to stop the suffering, reclaim money spent in other states, and build a new industry in our great state? Right now, there are thousands of Kansans using cannabis illegally. They do it for many reasons. The one I hear most often is that they will do anything to stop a loved ones suffering. Anything. These people are business and community leaders, professionals, aging parents, mothers, fathers, and workers from all walks of life. They are forced to use in secret, buy cannabis legally or illegally, transport it, or grow plants at home. They risk everything they have worked so hard for and pray they don't get caught. This is totally unacceptable in this day and age! The scientific proof that cannabis does have medicinal value has been proven. People who are using it are realizing astounding health improvements, getting off opioids, and returning to a productive life. I will acknowledge there are some people who are unable to tolerate cannabis and must make the decision to seek other solutions for healing. Thankfully this is a very small population of cannabis users. Nurses and other healthcare professionals have worked hard to rise above the "reefer madness" mentality and stigma that still exists today with cannabis. We are a professional group founded in scientific principals and evidence-based practice. If there was no value to it there would not be thousands of us working in this field. There would not be any national recognition, national symposiums, or physicians and researchers sharing new found knowledge multiple times a year. We can no longer afford to sit on the fence watching good people suffer needlessly, or worse watch them leave Kansas to live where they can have legal access to cannabis. Let's build a new industry together, become leaders in cannabis healthcare, founded securely in scientific principles. I along with thousands of other nurses, physicians, healthcare professionals and patients thank you for the forward movement of this bill. We also thank you for your dedication to the people of Kansas as you strive to do what is best for all.

Sincerely

Cheryl Kumberg RN, CMT