



Tips and Talking Points for Testifying at the Judiciary Committee Hearing on Gov. Lamont's Legalization Bill

What: Connecticut Judiciary Committee Public Hearing on S.B. 888 – An Act Responsibly and Equitably Regulating Adult-Use Cannabis

Where: The public hearing can be viewed via [YouTube Live](#). In addition, the public hearing may be recorded and broadcast live on [CT-N.com](#).

When: Friday, February 26 at 10:00 a.m.

How: Individuals who wish to testify via Zoom must register using the [On-line Testimony Registration Form](#). Registration will close on Thursday, February 25 at 3:00 p.m. The order for speakers will be listed in a randomized order and posted on the Judiciary Committee website on February 26 at 8:00 a.m. under Public Hearing Testimony. Please email written testimony in Word or PDF format to Judtestimony@cga.ct.gov. Testimony should clearly state testifier name and related bill number. The Committee requests that testimony be limited to matters related to the items on the Agenda.

Tips:

- The Committee is Chaired by Senator Gary Winfield and Representative Steven Stafstrom.
- The first hour of the hearing will be limited to constitutional officers, state agency heads, and chief elected municipal officials.
- Speakers are limited to three minutes of testimony, plus any questions from the Committee.
- The Committee encourages witnesses to submit a written statement and to condense oral testimony to a summary of that statement. All public hearing testimony, written and spoken, is public information. As such, it will be made available on the CGA website and indexed by internet search engines.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay! You can note that another witness — such as an MPP staffer — should be able to respond to the question.

S.B. 888 - Short Summary

- Legalizes possession of up to one and a half ounces.
- Decriminalizes possession of up to two and a half ounces, reducing the penalty to a civil

penalty.

- Law enforcement would be prohibited from effectuating an arrest or seizure of cannabis on the sole basis of activity in violation of federal law.
 - Law enforcement may not expend resources, including time, to offer information or support to federal law enforcement for federal cannabis violations.
 - Allows medical dispensaries to apply for conversion to hybrid retailers beginning September 1, 2021 without applying to lottery process. Adult-use sales would begin on May 4, 2022. Consumers could purchase up to one ounce per day.
 - Establishes a wholesale tax of \$1.25 per dry weight gram of cannabis flower, \$.50 per dry weight gram of cannabis trim, and \$.28 per wet weight gram of cannabis, in addition to the state sales tax of 6.25%.
 - Allows municipalities to levy a 3% gross receipt tax.
 - Directs revenue from cannabis licensing and taxes into the General Fund for 2022 and 2023. In 2024, 50% of the monies would be directed towards payments in lieu of taxes to municipalities and the remaining 50% would go to the General Fund. In addition, the Equity Commission will make recommendations on redirecting funds.
 - Full summary available [here](#).
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Talking Points

We've provided some talking points below. However, it is advisable to avoid too much repetition. (Briefly making a few key points that other witnesses have made can be worthwhile, though.) If you know individuals whose lives were negatively impacted by cannabis prohibition, sharing those stories can also be quite powerful.

- **Prohibition hasn't worked — marijuana use is mainstream and widespread.** Relatively few Americans had heard of marijuana when the federal government first effectively prohibited it in 1937. Today, government data shows more than 118 million Americans admit to having tried it (24 million in the last month), and every year, the Monitoring the Future survey finds that four out of five high school seniors say marijuana is easy to obtain.
 - **Marijuana laws are disproportionately enforced.** According to the ACLU, African Americans are more than 3.5 times as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than whites nationwide, despite similar rates of usage.
 - **Regulation allows for control.** Unlike licensed businesses in states that regulate cannabis, illicit marijuana sellers operate virtually anywhere and have no incentive not to sell to minors. Prohibition guarantees that marijuana will not be tested for purity and potency, creating the risk of contamination by dangerous pesticides, molds, bacteria, or even lacing.
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We are urging the committee to make the following changes to strengthen the bill and then pass it out of committee:

- **Ensure Substantial Funding for Equity and Reinvestment** — Sec. 98 directs cannabis revenue allocation, with 50% going each to the General Fund and PILOT. It does not specify any

percent will be directed to communities hardest hit by prohibition. It is imperative that S.B. 888 explicitly directs the bulk of the revenue toward equity and community reinvestment. In addition, a portion of the proceeds should be used for prevention and treatment. For example, the bill could provide that each fiscal year, at least 75% of tax proceeds be directed to community reinvestment and equity, which can be fleshed out based on the Equity Commission's recommendations, and 5% must be directed to youth prevention, public health education, and substance abuse treatment.

- **Expand Expungement** — Sec. 4 provides automatic expungement and erasure for cannabis possession. We urge it to be revised to allow no-cost expungement for *all* cannabis-related offenses. Individuals should not be haunted by a scarlet letter for the same actions that will be making millions for the state and licensed businesses.
 - **Ensuring Equity In Licensing** — S.B. 888 needs to be revised to ensure equity in licensing. It provides for a lottery for licenses and allows for the lottery to be conducted before the Equity Commission comes back with a report on how to promote equity in licensing. A substantial percent of licenses must be set aside for equity applicants.
 - **Direct Early-Start Fees to Equity** — Sec. 19 allows existing medical producers to sell to adult-use cannabis establishments, except delivery licenses, after paying hefty fees and getting DCP approval for medical supply. However, it does not specify what those fees will be used for. It is imperative that early-start fees be directed towards equity in the industry, such as for start-up funding and technical assistance.
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