

Alejandro Rangel-Lopez
Resident of Dodge City
Proponent Testimony on SB135
For the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

March 15th, 2023

Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of SB135. When considering legislation such as this one that would legalize cannabis for medical usage, I think it's important that we get it right the first go-around. I liken it to one of those mattresses you order online that comes rolled up; once you open that bag, there's no going back. While this is a good bill, there are provisions that can be added to ensure the maximum number of Kansans benefit from this legislation.

As a lifelong resident of southwest Kansas who doesn't plan on going anywhere anytime soon, it's important that we make sure that the only dispensaries aren't located solely in Wichita and the Kansas City metro because licensing fees are too expensive and thus, only Multi-State Operators (MSOs) can afford to do business here. We have a chance to uplift hardworking Kansans and build a medical cannabis market that not only meets folks' medical needs but builds futures for folks of all backgrounds, especially those who hail from communities most impacted by cannabis criminalization. The most effective way that I've seen other states have done this is by including a tiered-licensing system where operations pay licensing fees dependent on size. Additionally, setting aside a certain number of these licenses for communities hit hardest by the "War on Drugs" in conjunction with the expungement of records of folks convicted of possession would help to alleviate some of the harms faced by Black and brown Kansans. For context on what I mean, I crunched some numbers for Ford County and for a three-month period from November 2022 to the end of January this year, there were 165 total arrests with ~17 of those directly related to marijuana possession/paraphernalia. These are folks my age; names I recognize from my graduating class and even elementary school. It's heartbreaking. And for what?

I'm tired of seeing folks suffer needlessly due to inaction from our lawmakers. Whether that's a terminally ill patient hoping for a bit of relief from literal years of pain or someone my age caught in an endless cycle of parole because they had a lapse in judgment one fateful day three years ago. It's time for us to turn a new leaf and welcome new industry, opportunities, and futures for *all* Kansans.

Thank you for your time.

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