

March 12, 2023  
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Dear Committee Members:

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. In order to understand the situation I have, you first need to know a little bit about me. I am 34, a mother to 3, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a friend. My husband and myself both work 40 hours a week in order to support our family. I see my doctor once a year for my yearly check-up. I have had no major health issues, until now. I believe access to medical marijuana would help alleviate several side effects of my ailments.

In February of 2022, I spoke with my doctor about my persistent insomnia. I have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. I tried eliminating everything that studies have shown that ease insomnia to no avail. I was prescribed a sleeping aid to try to help me sleep. It did not make a noticeable difference. I could take the sleeping pill and still be awake 3 hours later. This did not work for me. Medical marijuana would help me fall asleep and stay asleep.

In the same month, I was diagnosed with the auto-immune disease called Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. I now have to take a synthetic hormone pill to regulate my TSH levels. Side effects of Hashimoto's are fatigue and sluggishness, muscle weakness, muscle aches, joint pain and stiffness. I have days where I have to force myself to eat because I do not have an appetite. I have days where it is physically hard to get out of bed because my muscles and my joints ache. Medical marijuana would ease symptoms of my auto-immune disease.

I ended up going to the ER in June of 2022. My pulse was racing. My neck was stiff. My heart felt like it was pounding out of my chest. This was a surreal experience. I felt like there was no hope. I felt like that would be the day that I would die. I would have to leave my kids without their mother, leave my husband without a wife. I was prescribed anxiety medication after seeing my doctor with the instructions that I could take up to 3 pills a day, along with an acid reflux medication.

Within a 4 month period, I was on 4 medications. Levothyroxine (thyroid medication), Hydroxyzine (anxiety), Omeprazole (acid reflux), and Trazodone (sleeping aid). Here is what happens if you mix these medications together:

Levothyroxine and Omeprazole – You need the acid in your stomach for your body to absorb the thyroid medication. If you take these medications together – you risk the thyroid hormone not absorbing properly thus the thyroid medication not working as it was intended.

Hydroxyzine and Trazadone - this mix can cause an irregular heart rhythm, which can be life-threatening. I have experienced anxiety after having taken my sleeping aid. I cannot take the anxiety medication if that happens. This is not ideal in my situation. What choice did I have? Do I take my sleeping aid in hopes that I can get a good night's sleep, and risk having an anxiety attack that I can do nothing about?

I just recently spoke with my doctor and stopped the acid reflux medication and the sleep aid. I stopped taking the sleep aid because I would get anxiety after having taken it. I still suffer through persistent insomnia. I had to inform my coworkers of my persistent insomnia and the sluggishness from my thyroid disorder accompanied by lack of sleep - in case I fall asleep at my desk.

It has taken several months after the June incident to get diagnosed with anxiety and depression. It has taken 9 months to get a diagnosis of PTSD. In February 2023, I am now up to 7 medications – 3 of which are for anxiety/depression/PTSD. This does NOT include anytime I have to take a pain reliever for my joints, does not include any sleep aid. Medical marijuana would help relieve my anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

In states that have access to medical marijuana, this plant has shown to have several medicinal purposes in flower form and in concentrated form. Medical marijuana helps aid people in sleeping. It helps aid people with anxiety. It helps aid people with muscle pain. It helps patients with PTSD. If medical marijuana was accessible, I alone could get relief from pain, anxiety, depression, PTSD, nausea, increase my appetite on days where I do not want to eat, and relief from insomnia.

At age 12, I was diagnosed with Shingles. This causes severe pain that can last for weeks, months, or years after the Shingles have resolved. I was given an antibiotic and a generic Tylenol #3 with Codeine. An Opioid. At age 12. I say this because I do not bring up the pain associated with my disorder with my doctor. I do not want to be a statistic of becoming addicted to an opioid pain killer.

I have to watch people that I love suffer. My mother was diagnosed with Sjogren's. My father has had a broken back and now relies on muscle relaxers to ease his pain. My brother suffers through Sciatic Nerve pain. My husband suffers through pain in his hands from a work related accident. He is in pain by the day's end because he works in a very labor intensive field. My father in law suffers through the pain associated with degenerative disc disease.

In America, we have endless choices. We can choose which politicians we want to be our voice. We can choose where to live, what to eat, what to do for a career. We can choose to smoke cigarettes which are KNOWN to give us cancer. We can choose to drink alcohol which is known to make our organs fail if used long enough and frequent enough.

In a country where we are free to choose, why do we not have a choice for a natural medicine? Why does majority of the states in America see that medical marijuana does have health benefits, but Kansas does not? I should have a choice when it comes to my medications – my health – and my mental state. I should be able to have access to medical marijuana in flower form or concentrated form. It should not be restricted. Inhaling medical marijuana is what works for me.

I truly hope that my testimony touches you, and reminds you of someone in your life. Someone who has to live with chronic pain. Someone who has to live with chronic insomnia. Someone who suffers day in and day out with a mental disorder.

Wouldn't you want your child, your mother, your daughter, your brother, your parents, your friends to have a choice?

Thank you once again-

Keshia Justice

Proud resident of Kansas who wants to have access to all forms of Medical Marijuana