



Honorable Senators,

My name is Gary Upah, owner of Soggy Bottom Hemp brand CBD products, and I would like to submit Written-only proponent testimony for the hearing on SB135 which is scheduled for a hearing on Wednesday, March 15.

I wish to offer some insight from the perspective of a 60+ year-old conservative who is also a licensed Kansas Hemp grower. Our company has been growing hemp for CBD and CBG since the inception of the Kansas Hemp Program in 2019. We also manufacture a line of medicinal products which we sell at Farmers Markets and community events in the Kansas City area, and in drug stores and pain clinics throughout Kansas.

I have personally experienced the pain and anxiety relief that cannabinoids provide, as have hundreds of my customers. We receive feedback and hear stories every week about how cannabis in its various forms is helping our customers conquer pain and alleviate addictions to many expensive pharmaceutical drugs. Given the incredible amount of data already available and already provided to this distinguished body about the medicinal value of Cannabis, it would be redundant to repeat it again here. However:

Drug related crime is of great concern to all of us, but if you ask any beat cop working the streets, they will tell you that they would rather answer a call related to cannabis than alcohol because of the nonviolent behavior of cannabis users. Organized crime follows the money so I would advocate for reduced penalties for cannabis users, and stiffer penalties for non-licensed growers and distributors. This path would also help to reduce the price disparity between legal and illegal products experienced in other states.

I recently heard the argument that medical cannabis is a pathway to recreational cannabis. This seems unlikely as Kansas is not a ballot State like many of our neighbors and therefore more easily controlled at the legislative level. Failing to do anything, however, puts our citizens at risk of breaking laws while commuting across State lines, law enforcement at risk of having to enforce those laws, and even our legislators at risk of losing the State to a voting population who overwhelmingly supports cannabis legalization. As evidence, I would remind you of a certain gubernatorial candidate who lost his recent race due in no small part to his unpopular position on another issue personally reprehensible to him, but very important to his constituents. As our Kansas population ages, the number of those in support of legal cannabis will only grow, while those against will fade.

The Bill in front of you is a thoughtful start to a program that is long overdue, and undoubtedly inevitable. Please stop kicking this can down the road and pass SB135 in this legislative session.

Respectfully,

Gary Upah

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