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WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
AND AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1246

February 4, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Room 325 and Videoconference

RELATING TO CANNABIS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill (H.B.) No. 1246: 1) establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office (HCHO), administratively attached to the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA); 2) legalizes the sale and possession of cannabis for non-medical adult use beginning January 1, 2026; 3) establishes the Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Special Fund (CRESF) to be administered and expended by HCHO, with four subaccounts to fund various new grant programs; 4) requires the Department of Taxation (TAX), starting January 1, 2026, to administer a cannabis tax permit and collect 14% of the gross proceeds of sales from cannabis, excluding medical cannabis, and 4% of the gross proceeds of sales of medical cannabis, excluding wholesale, with allocations to the CRESF, its subaccounts, the counties, and the Department of the Attorney General (AG); 5) specifies that the standard general excise tax (GET) shall not apply to the retail or wholesale sale of cannabis and medical cannabis; 6) transfers all appropriations, property,

and other cannabis-related interests held by various agencies to HCHO; 7) transfers all unexpended and unencumbered balances of various hemp and cannabis-related special funds to the CRESF; and 8) amends or repeals various parts of the HRS and other Acts pertaining to cannabis.

Furthermore, this bill makes blank general fund and special fund appropriations to DCCA's HCHO, TAX, and AG for FY 26 and FY 27 for unspecified numbers of full-time equivalents and to administer the various intents of this bill. It should be further noted that Section 60 provides an extended lapse date of June 30, 2028, for all appropriations.

As a matter of general policy, B&F does not support the creation of any special fund, which does not meet the requirements of Section 37-52.3, HRS. Special funds should: 1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose, scope of work and an explanation why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; 2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; 3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and 4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. Regarding H.B. No. 1246, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed CRESF will be self-sustaining.

B&F defers to TAX on the tax revenue projections and general fund impact of H.B. No. 1246; however, B&F notes that Senate Bill No. 3335, S.D. 1, from the 2024 Legislative Session proposed the same tax rates on the gross sales of cannabis and medical cannabis. TAX projected tax revenue for the cannabis sales taxes would be \$4,400,000 for FY 26 and \$17,000,000 for FY 27 but also noted that the exemption of cannabis sales from the GET would result in a general fund revenue loss of \$1,000,000 for FY 26 and \$2,500,000 for FY 27.

Other State “sin” taxes generate significantly more annually than the amounts being projected for the cannabis sales taxes – for reference, cigarette and liquor tax collections were respectively \$84,200,000 and \$51,600,000 for FY 24 – and also direct larger portions of revenues to the general fund to offset the State’s overall administrative costs to regulate harmful products – H.B. No. 1246’s proposed distribution of cannabis sales tax revenues will provide less than 30% of collections to the general fund, whereas the cigarette tax provides more than 50% of collections to the general fund and the liquor tax provides all collections to the general fund. B&F recommends that the tax on cannabis products be set at a parity to, if not higher than, other “sin” taxes, with a portion of revenues deposited to the general fund to support the extensive legal, regulatory, and grant-issuing framework proposed by this bill in a self-sustaining manner.

Furthermore, B&F recommends the transfer of appropriations, positions, and other assets from the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and Department of Health (DOH) to DCCA’s HCHO, currently set for the bill’s effective date of July 1, 2025, be effective no earlier than July 1, 2026, to allow B&F sufficient time to consult with the affected agencies and facilitate the transfer. The details of the budget transfers should be specified in the budget worksheets and facilitated through the budget act, rather than in separate legislation, to avoid any ambiguity or misunderstanding in the budget details to be transferred.

Finally, B&F defers to DOA, AG, DCCA, DOH, and TAX on the programmatic merits of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
and
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems**

**Tuesday, February 4, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS.**

Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Nadine Ando, and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (Department or DCCA). The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant; (2) beginning January 1, 2026, legalize the personal adult use of cannabis; (3) establish taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis; (4) add new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate; (5) make conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis; (6) beginning January 1, 2026, decriminalize certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana

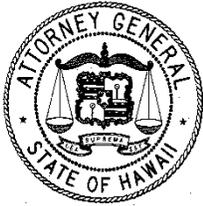
concentrate; (7) transfer the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office; (8) establish various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis; and (9) appropriate funds.

The Department acknowledges the complex nature of the cannabis issue, involving considerations related to public health, safety, and economic opportunities. The commitment to public health protections, including an extensive public health and education campaign, reflects a responsible approach to mitigate potential risks associated with cannabis use. The Department also supports the intent to establish a zero-tolerance policy toward distributing cannabis to individuals under the age of twenty-one and driving under the influence of cannabis.

The Department would like to underscore the significance of the clear separation of operations between the DCCA and the Hawai'i cannabis and hemp office, as delineated in the proposed legislation. Part II, §A-11 (a) emphasizes that the Hawai'i cannabis and hemp office is to be a public body corporate and politic within the Department for administrative purposes only. The legislation explicitly states that the DCCA shall not direct or exert authority over the day-to-day operations or functions of the authority. This clear separation ensures that the Hawai'i cannabis and hemp office operates independently, fostering effective governance and decision-making in the field of cannabis regulation.

The Department would also like to address challenges faced by financial institutions nationwide, particularly in Hawai'i. It is important to note that financial institutions across the nation are not for or against cannabis sales (medical or adult use). Financial institutions have hesitated to open accounts due to the Anti-Money Laundering Act and the Bank Secrecy Act, which impose severe penalties on individual employees for aiding and abetting money laundering activities. Importantly, the proposed bill cannot address federal penalties for money laundering, a point discussed in detail with relevant authorities. Financial institutions nationwide do not take a stance on marijuana sales but emphasize the limited availability of banking services, with approximately 100 banks and credit unions providing such services across the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on this bill.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS AND ON
AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

DATE: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Andrew Goff, Deputy Attorney General

Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) offers the following comments on this bill.

We note initially that this bill contains blanked-out appropriations. If the Legislature decides to legalize cannabis, it is essential that funds be appropriated for the timely implementation of a substantial regulatory program and for law enforcement, nuisance abatement, and a public-education campaign prior to legalization, among other things. The bill legalizes the sale and possession of cannabis beginning January 1, 2026. E.g., page 10, lines 1-3. To meet this expedited timeline, adequate funding is necessary to establish the new Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office and implement the cannabis law effectively.

Additionally, the bill creates a statutory prohibition on possession of an open container of cannabis in a motor vehicle or on a moped. See page 213, line 16, through page 214, line 17. Open container laws are important because they keep our streets safer from impaired drivers. However, the prohibition makes an exception for open containers of cannabis transported in a moving vehicle if the open containers are concealed on a passenger or stored in the trunk, luggage compartment, or console or similar location "out of reach of the driver." See page 214, lines 8-12. This exception would make enforcement of the open container law difficult, as a driver can just pass

any open cannabis container, joint, or pipe, to their passenger or otherwise move it out of reach after a traffic stop, but before the officer reaches the car. We therefore recommend replacing the proposed section 291- (b) on page 214, lines 4-12, with the following:

(b) This section shall not apply to marijuana, marijuana concentrate, or a bottle, can, package, wrapper, smoking device, cartridge, or other receptacle containing any marijuana or marijuana concentrate that is stored in a trunk, luggage compartment, or similar location.

Furthermore, the bill would amend the penal code to reduce penalties for possession of: (1) up to five grams of marijuana concentrate; (2) up to one ounce of marijuana, and (3) up to ten ounces of marijuana within a private residence from the person's personal cultivation of marijuana, provided that at any private residence the total amount of cannabis from personal cultivation does not exceed an aggregate weight of two pounds regardless of the number of people residing there. See section 32, page 273, line 14, through page 274, line 5, and section 33, page 274, line 6, through page 275, line 20. Possession of these amounts would be reduced to a violation punishable by a \$25 fine or two hours of community service. *Id.*

The new cannabis law would also make these amounts legal for individuals over the age of twenty-one to possess. See Section A-51(a), page 87, line 7 through page 88, line 2. As a result, the penal code amendments would primarily reduce penalties for individuals under twenty-one who are not authorized to possess cannabis. If the Legislature lowers penalties for youth possession, we recommend adding further safeguards by inserting the following wording at page 274, line 5, and page 275, line 20:

Whenever a court sentences a person under twenty-one years old pursuant to this section, it shall also require that the person be referred for an assessment by a certified substance abuse counselor, of the person's substance abuse or dependence and the need for appropriate treatment. The counselor shall submit a report with a recommendation to the court. The court shall require the person to obtain appropriate treatment if the counselor's assessment establishes the person's substance abuse or

dependence. All costs for assessment and treatment shall be borne by the person or, if the person is under the age of eighteen, by the person's parent or guardian.

Finally, the Department notes that section 846-2.7, HRS, is scheduled for repeal on July 1, 2027, and will be reenacted in the form in which it read on the day before June 27, 2024, pursuant to Act 110, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024. Therefore, we recommend adding after "2026" on line 15, page 310, the following provision:

; provided that the amendments made to section 846-2.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, by section 35 of this Act shall not be repealed when section 846-2.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is reenacted on July 1, 2027, pursuant to section 4 of Act 110, Session Laws of Hawaii 2024.

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass the bill with the recommended amendments. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
AND
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025
2:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1246
RELATING TO CANNABIS

Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kusch, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1246. This bill establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning January 1, 2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning January 1, 2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. Appropriates funds.



The Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) supports the “one-plant” approach provided for in HB 1246. The HDOA also supports the inclusion of the provisions based on Act 263, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023 and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, informally known as 2018 Farm Bill, within the new Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office, as those were included in response to concerns raised by the Hawaii Hemp Farmers Association. These provisions are intended to provide legal support to the hemp farmers and the hemp industry in Hawaii, particularly those in Section Part VIII. HEMP.

HDOA supports the inclusion of provisions requiring hemp growers in Hawaii to comply with the USDA regulations regarding hemp production licensing in Section A-132(a) of HB 1246, and requiring compliance with the hemp cultivation buffer zones in Section A-132(b). This action ensures that no redundant regulations are imposed on the hemp farmers and clarifies that the USDA regulates hemp cultivation in Hawaii. In addition, HDOA supports the language in HB 1246, which makes clear that industrial hemp will not be regulated like cannabinoid hemp.

The HDOA believes that this bill provides substantial protection for hemp farmers and will support the hemp industry into the future, should the Legislature choose to legalize cannabis.

HDOA also offers comments particularly as it relates to potential importation of marijuana plants, propagative plant parts such as seeds, and unprocessed dried flower material into the State, including interisland movement. With the Hawaii Cannabis Law including the creation of the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office, which has “the power to administratively regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant in accordance with this chapter”, HDOA believes that additional changes to HRS 150A-5 and HRS 150A-8 are necessary to effectuate the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office’s administrative mission. Pursuant to HRS 150A-5, the HDOA’s Plant Quarantine Branch (PQB) currently regulates the importation of live plants, propagative plant parts such as seeds or cuttings, and unprocessed plant-growth or plant-products such as cut flowers or foliage in the raw state. As such, the importation of marijuana or hemp plants, seeds, and

other non-propagative materials in the raw state such as dried flowers, would be subject to PQB inspection prior to entry into the State to determine the presence of pests before release, which appears to conflict with the intent of this measure. To address this, the Department suggests the following change to HRS 150A-5 as listed below:

"§150A-5 Conditions of importation. The importation into the State of any of the following articles, except cannabis, a cannabis plant, and hemp, as defined by chapter A-3, the regulation of which is provided for in chapter A, viz., nursery-stock, tree, shrub, herb, vine, cut-flower, cutting, graft, scion, bud, seed, leaf, root, or rhizome; nut, fruit, or vegetable; grain, cereal, or legume in the natural or raw state; moss, hay, straw, dry-grass, or other forage; unmanufactured log, limb, or timber, or any other plant-growth or plant-product, unprocessed or in the raw state; soil; microorganisms; live bird, reptile, nematode, insect, or any other animal in any stage of development (that is in addition to the so-called domestic animal, the quarantine of which is provided for in chapter 142); box, vehicle, baggage, or any other container in which the articles have been transported or any packing material used in connection therewith shall be made in the manner hereinafter set forth:"

Pursuant to HRS 150A-8, and 4-72, HAR, live plants require inspection prior to interisland movement to ensure they are free of pests. 4-72, HAR, also gives the PQB the ability to randomly inspect non-propagative plant parts. As such, both appear to conflict with the intent of this measure. To address this, the Department suggests the following change to HRS 150A-5 as listed below:

"§150A-8 Transporting in State. Flora and fauna specified by rules and regulations of the department shall not

be moved from one island to another island within the State or from one locality to another on the same island except by a permit issued by the department. The requirements under this section, including associated rules, shall not apply to cannabis, a cannabis plant, and hemp, as defined by chapter A-3, the regulation of which is provided for in chapter A."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M. D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

BRENN H. HASHIMOTO
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

BRIAN K. FURUTO
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Statement of
BRENN H. HASHIMOTO
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Tuesday, February 4, 2025
2:00 PM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
HB 1246, Relating to Cannabis

Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs and the Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) offers the following comments on HB 1246, specifically as to the effect on state departments and public employees.

HB 1246 establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant and legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis.

As drafted, this measure may pose health and safety concerns if employees are allowed to possess cannabis in the workplace. As such, should this measure be advanced, we recommend the following amendments to ensure application and enforcement consistent with our current collective bargaining agreements and Executive Orders:

- To address cannabis at State worksites, HRD recommends that language be inserted in Part III, §A-45, subsection (2) on page 76, line 16, read as follows.

(2) The manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or medical use of cannabis:
- For clarification, we also suggest adding reference to Executive Orders on page 90, line 4, and page 70, line 11 to address employees excluded from collective bargaining:

Conducting drug testing and using the results of those tests for the discipline of an employee if the testing is done to comply with federal requirements or in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement or Executive Order;

- To again address cannabis at State worksites, we also recommend Part IV, §A-53, subsection (2) on page 92, line 6 be amended to read as follows.

(2) Any manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of cannabis:

We are available to answer any questions or provide further information as needed.

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GARY S. SUGANUMA
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**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. No. 1246, Relating to Cannabis.

BEFORE THE:

House Committees on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture & Food Systems

DATE: Tuesday, February 4, 2025

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325

Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice-Chairs Poepoe and Kusch, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding the tax provisions in H.B. 1246, which establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office; establishes laws for the cultivation, manufacture, sale, and personal adult-use of cannabis; amends or repeals existing laws relating to cannabis, including hemp; establishes taxes for adult-use cannabis sales; legalizes the possession of certain amounts of cannabis for individuals 21 years of age and over beginning January 1, 2026; and transfers the personnel and assets of the Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation from the Department of Health to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office.

Part III of the bill, beginning on page 197, creates a new chapter B in title 14, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), entitled "Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law." Under proposed section B-2, persons engaged in the retail sale of cannabis, including retail sales of medical cannabis, must obtain a cannabis tax permit from DOTAX. Under proposed section B-3, retail sales of cannabis will be subject to a 14 percent tax on gross proceeds, and retail sales of medical cannabis subject to a 4 percent tax on gross sales.

Under proposed Section B-7 all revenues collected under the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law are to be distributed as follows:

- An amount necessary to “defray the cost of the operations and administrative expenses of the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office” is to be deposited in the Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Special Fund;
- After making the distribution above:
 - 30% deposited into the Social Equity Grant Program subaccount;
 - 10% deposited into the Public Health and Education Grant Program subaccount;
 - 5% deposited into the Hawaii Hemp Grant Program subaccount;
 - 5% deposited to the counties and allocated based on the percentage of revenue collected from the respective counties;
 - 5% deposited to the Department of the Attorney General for the Drug Nuisance Abatement Unit;
 - 5% deposited to the Department of the Attorney General for the Special Investigation and Prosecution Division.

Section 12 of the bill on page 240 exempts from civil service the tax law change specialists to be retained by DOTAX to assist with the implementation of the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law.

Section 16 of the bill on page 245 authorizes DOTAX to require the electronic filing of returns, applications, reports, or other documents required by the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law.

Section 18 of the bill, beginning on page 245, amends section 237-24.3, HRS, to exempt amounts received from the sales of cannabis and medical cannabis from the Hawaii general excise tax.

Sections 58 and 59 of the bill, beginning on page 307, establish unspecified numbers of the following positions within DOTAX to aid the administration of the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law:

1. Auditors;
2. Cashiers;
3. Special Enforcement Section Investigators;
4. Tax information technicians; and
5. Tax law change specialists.

The bill has an effective date of December 31, 2025, and specifies that Part III of

the bill, regarding the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law, will take effect on January 1, 2026.

DOTAX notes that, should this measure be passed, DOTAX will need two auditors, one cashier, two special enforcement section investigators, two tax information technicians, and two tax law change specialists to implement and administer the tax law provisions.

DOTAX recommends that the following subsection be added after page 202, line 18 to address the statute of limitations on collections during appeals:

(5) An appeal of the assessment is pending before the taxation board of review or the tax appeal court, beginning on the date the notice of appeal is filed and concluding on the date a final decision is issued or the case is withdrawn or dismissed."

DOTAX requests that the amount to be allocated to the Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Special Fund on pages 204-205 be specified. The existing verbiage only distributes "An amount necessary to defray the cost of the operations and administrative expenses of the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office...."

DOTAX also recommends that page 205, lines 17 to 20, be amended to specify the manner in which revenues to the counties will be allocated. Similar to the allocation of income from sales of tangible personal property for the general excise tax, revenue from the cannabis tax to the counties should be based on the county in which the cannabis is delivered.

DOTAX requests, if the measure is passed with the specified number of positions necessary to enforce this measure, that the authorization of cannabis sales and tax law provisions in part III of the bill take effect no earlier than January 1, 2027. This would afford DOTAX sufficient time to make the necessary system and form changes and provide taxpayer education on the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB1246
RELATING TO CANNABIS**

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID A. TARNAS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: February 4, 2025

Room Number: 325

1 **Fiscal Implications:** Significant. The Department of Health (“Department”) requests that this
2 measure be considered as a vehicle to provide this needed funding so long as it does not supplant
3 the priorities and requests outlined in the Governors executive budget request.

4 **Department Position:** The Department offers comments regarding HB1246 which proposes to
5 legalize the sale and possession of cannabis for personal adult use and establish the Hawaii
6 cannabis and hemp office as an independent body with the power to regulate all aspects hemp.

7 **Department Testimony:** The Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation (OMCCR)
8 provides the following testimony on behalf of the Department.

9 Public health and safety concerns

10 The Department appreciates that a priority of HB1246 is the implementation of extensive, well-
11 funded public health protections. Nonetheless, despite this and the strong regulatory
12 requirements proposed, legalizing adult use of cannabis should be expected to have a negative
13 impact on the health of the public. As such, the Department remains highly concerned about the
14 public health and environmental impacts that the increased accessibility of cannabis and opening
15 of an adult use marketplace will bring. As reported by the Act 169 Dual Use of Cannabis Task
16 Force, Public Health and Safety Working Group¹, there are a wide range of public health and

1 safety concerns associated with cannabis use and exposure. Charts depicting Hawaii-specific data
2 are attached to the Department's testimony.

3 Figure 1a. 24% of young adults, aged 18-24 years, reported using cannabis in the past
4 month in 2022.

5 Figure 1b. Trends for smoking cannabis decreased to 60% while vaping increased to 16%
6 for methods for use.

7 Figure 1c. There is community variations for cannabis use with higher use rates by
8 neighbor island counties, and with communities that have lower income levels.

9 Figure 2a. Cannabis use in the past month for high school students was 14% in 2023.

10 Figure 2b. Native Hawaiian and black students reported the highest use of marijuana in
11 the past 30 days.

12 Figure3. Students reported the ability to access alcohol, marijuana, tobacco/vape, and
13 other drugs through various means.

14 **Mental Health and Substance Use:** Mental health, substance use, and youth suicide are critical
15 priorities of the Department. There is substantial evidence that adolescents and young adults who
16 use cannabis daily, or near-daily, are more likely than non-users to develop future psychotic
17 disorders such as schizophrenia and for daily, or near-daily, adult users to be diagnosed with a
18 psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia.^{2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13} There is also substantial evidence
19 that adolescent and young adult cannabis users are more likely than non-users to increase their
20 use and to develop cannabis use disorder and that increases in cannabis use frequency is generally
21 associated with progression to developing cannabis use disorder.^{14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22} Additionally,
22 there is moderate evidence that adolescents and young adults who use cannabis are more likely
23 than non-users to have suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide, and have an increased incidence of
24 suicide completion.^{23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39}

1 **Fetus and Newborn Exposures:** Fetus and newborn exposure to cannabis is an increasingly
2 growing concern. National estimates show that between 3 to 7% of pregnant women report using
3 cannabis while pregnant.^{40,41} Biological evidence shows that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the
4 primary intoxicating compound in cannabis is passed through the placenta of women who use
5 cannabis during pregnancy and that the fetus absorbs and metabolizes the THC.^{42,43,44,45,46} Despite
6 this, cannabis use among pregnant women has continued to increase amidst the perceived lack of
7 risk from the increasing acceptance and accessibility of cannabis.^{47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56} Biological
8 evidence also shows that THC is present in the breast milk of women who use cannabis and that
9 infants who drink breast milk containing THC absorb and metabolize the THC.^{57,58,59,60,61} There
10 is substantial evidence of association between maternal cannabis smoking and lower birth weight
11 of offspring^{62,63} and moderate evidence that maternal use of cannabis during pregnancy is
12 associated with decreased academic ability, attention problems, reduced cognitive function, and
13 decreased IQ scores in exposed offspring.^{64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71,72,73,74,75,76,77}

14 **Environmental Concerns:** According to an October 2020 report by the Denver Environmental
15 Health Cannabis Sustainability Work Group, cultivation of cannabis has had significant impacts
16 on consumption of energy and water, generation of solid waste, effluent discharge, greenhouse
17 gas emissions, land use, nuisance odor control, and indoor air quality.^{78,79} Also in October 2020,
18 the National Cannabis Industry Association issued "Environmental Sustainability in the
19 Cannabis Industry: Impacts, Best Management Practices, and Policy Considerations,"
20 highlighting the impacts of the industry on land and soil health, water use, energy consumption,
21 air quality, and waste.⁸⁰ In addition, the Cannabis Regulators Association (CANNRA) has
22 provided guidance regarding the need for state and local environmental regulatory agencies to
23 engage and work with cannabis businesses in determining and quantifying environmental
24 impacts, and best ways to achieve compliance regarding energy use, waste management, air
25 quality, and water quality.⁸¹ Finally, CANNRA has also provided guidance regarding nuisance
26 odor compliance, which have been and continue to be, an ongoing source of complaints for
27 private residence cultivation and should be expected to increase with adult use legalization.⁸²

1 **Youth and Young Adults:** Although proposed legalized adult use will be restricted to those
2 aged 21 and older, the human brain continues to develop into the mid-20s and remains vulnerable
3 to the effects of addictive substances substances.^{83,84} Protecting young adults who are legally
4 allowed to use cannabis but still very vulnerable to its detrimental effects will not work with age
5 restrictions alone. Also, although the use of child-resistant packaging reduces unintentional
6 pediatric poisonings from a wide range of products,^{92,93,94} these still rely on the user to properly
7 employ and maintain the packaging. A recent retrospective analysis of National Poison Data
8 System data for pediatric exposures to edible cannabis products in children younger than age 6
9 years found an increase of 1,375% from 2017-2021 with a significant increase in both ICU and
10 non-ICU admissions.⁹⁵ Toxic pediatric exposures continue to be reported.⁹⁶ In addition to
11 packaging requirements, restriction of advertising and marketing practices remain critical to
12 preventing appeal to youth as well as preventing the encouragement of increased consumption
13 and targeting of marginalized communities as practiced by the tobacco industry.^{97,98} There is
14 substantial evidence that more unintentional exposures for children occur in states with increased
15 legal access to cannabis and these exposures can lead to significant clinical effects requiring
16 medical attention.^{99,100,101,102,103,104,105,106,107,108}

17 Regulatory framework

18 Should the legislature choose to pass this measure, the Department provides the following
19 comments on the bill's regulatory framework as a resource to the legislature:

20 **Delayed Effective Date:** The Department strongly supports delaying the effective date for
21 legalized adult use and the opening of the marketplace and exemption of certain procurements
22 from requirements under chapter 103D. However, the Department recommends a minimum of
23 twelve (12) months, rather than (6) months, to allow for adequate time to establish the Hawaii
24 cannabis and hemp office, adopt Hawaii Administrative Rules, transfer personnel and assets from
25 the Department of Health to the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office, convert existing and license
26 new businesses, and other myriad aspects of standing up a new agency. Many processes in the
27 state system move slowly and are often constrained by limited resources within the program
28 itself. For example, the reorganization to establish OMCCR from the Patient Registry and

1 Dispensary Licensing programs was initiated in June 2018 and not recognized until July 2019.
2 Documents to establish the new OMCCR administrative positions created by the reorganization
3 were submitted in April 2019 and the first positions became available for recruitment September
4 2019. Even with interim rulemaking authority, limited amendments to administrative rules take
5 at least 4 to 6 months to complete. These limitations are not unique to Hawaii, and other states
6 have reported timelines of 6 months to more than 2 years from the effective date of adult-use to
7 accepting new license applications and an additional 6 to 24 months before issuing licenses. The
8 delayed effective date and flexibility to contract for services to effect the needed changes will be
9 critical to operationalizing an adult-use regime.

10 **Regulatory Standards:** The Department appreciates requirements for laboratory standards and
11 testing, packaging and labeling, products standards, and advertising and marketing controls.
12 Cannabis testing capability and capacity will be critical to the oversight of private commercial
13 testing laboratories and investigations of adverse consumer events. These provisions will help to
14 ensure that cannabinoid-containing products intended for human consumption and use meet the
15 same consumer protection standards as non-cannabinoid-containing products. In other words,
16 other than the effect of the cannabinoid content, a hemp-derived gummy and a cannabis-derived
17 gummy should be as safe to consume as a commercial candy gummy. These requirements will
18 help to protect the public, especially youth, novice cannabis users, and seniors from unintended
19 intoxication, over-toxication, deceptive and misleading claims, and unsafe products. The
20 Department also appreciates the maintenance of key existing medical use provisions, the
21 limitations against any use of cannabis that endangers the health or well-being of another person,
22 especially the use at any place open to the public, including smoking or vaping cannabis in public
23 as prohibited by chapter 328J, and the use of cannabis by anyone under twenty-one years of age.

24 **Intoxicating Hemp Products:** The Department greatly appreciates the inclusion of regulatory
25 oversight of hemp-derived cannabinoid products under the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office.
26 Cannabinoids are cannabinoids, regardless of whether they are derived from cannabis or hemp
27 plants, or synthesized, and some have psychoactive or intoxicating properties.¹¹⁵ The 2018 Farm
28 Bill's focus on the concentration of delta-9 THC as defining legal hemp and hemp products has

1 created a loophole through which consumers, including children, can walk into convenience
2 stores and gas stations, or shop online and purchase products that have the same psychoactive or
3 intoxicating effects as cannabis. There are a number of these "hemp synthesized intoxicants
4 (HSIs)," the most common being Delta-8 THC and Delta-10 THC. HSIs present serious health
5 risks as they are typically created through chemical methods that involve solvents, acids, and
6 catalysts. Poorly controlled production can leave behind harmful residual solvents, heavy metals,
7 or reaction byproducts, some of which may be toxic or carcinogenic. Additionally, as these HSIs
8 do not naturally occur in significant amounts, there is little to no research regarding long-term
9 health effects of these products. There are serious concerns that long-term exposure could lead to
10 negative health outcomes such as liver toxicity, immune system suppression, or unexpected
11 interactions with other medications.

12 States have begun to regulate these HSIs more strictly to ensure consumer safety. In October
13 2023, Virginia's restriction of HSIs was upheld by a federal court, and Attorneys General in
14 Nebraska, California, and Connecticut have filed lawsuits or enforcement actions against HSI
15 manufacturers and sellers, citing health and safety risks to consumers.^{116,117,118} On September 28,
16 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning letter¹¹⁹ to a manufacturer
17 of food products, including gummies, that contain Delta-8 THC. In its warning letter, FDA noted
18 that:

19 1) Delta-8 THC products have not been evaluated or approved by FDA for safe
20 use and may be marketed in ways that put the public health at risk; 2) FDA has
21 received adverse event reports involving Delta-8 THC containing products; 3)
22 Delta-8 THC has psychoactive and intoxicating effects; 4) FDA is concerned
23 about the processes used to create the concentrations of Delta-8 THC claimed in
24 the marketplace; and 5) FDA is concerned about Delta-8 THC products that may
25 be consumed by children, as some packaging and labeling may appeal to children.

26 **One Plant, One Regulatory Agency:** The Department strongly supports the "one plant, one
27 regulatory agency" best practice that HB1246 contemplates by placing medical use, adult use,
28 and hemp cannabinoid processing and products under the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office.

1 As a founding member of the Cannabis Regulatory Association ("CANNRA," [ra.org/](https://www.cann-
2 ra.org/)), the Department has learned from the experience of other states transitioning medical to
3 adult use, and the pitfalls of having multiple regulatory agencies has been a common, recurring
4 challenge. As a result, more states are either starting as one regulatory agency or transitioning to
5 one agency that regulates hemp cannabinoid products together with cannabis. Currently, 11 of
6 CANNRA's member states regulate hemp cannabinoid products under the same agency as
7 cannabis¹²⁰, and an additional four states have pending legislation or have authorized the
8 cannabis agency to regulate hemp cannabinoid products.¹²¹ Hawaii is already one of the 11 states
9 where hemp cannabinoid products are regulated by the same agency as cannabis—i.e., the
10 Department's Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation. States where cannabis and
11 hemp cannabinoid products are regulated by separate entities experience serious challenges with
12 regulatory gaps and inconsistent regulations, resulting in uncertainty for the industry and
13 consumers.

14 It is important to point out that HB1246 does not propose to regulate industrial hemp products
15 under the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office. Only hemp cultivation, processing and the
16 manufacturing of hemp cannabinoid products that are intended for human consumption and use
17 will be regulated by the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office. This approach will help to ensure that all
18 cannabinoid-containing products, whether derived from cannabis or hemp, will meet the same
19 basic good manufacturing practices of non-infused, commercially available counterparts.

20 **Law Enforcement Role:** The Department supports the continuing role of law enforcement as
21 proposed by HB1246. As the state's regulator for medical use cannabis, the Department values
22 and relies on the support of law enforcement agencies such as the state Narcotics Enforcement
23 Division and county police to address non-compliance and more serious criminal offenses. The
24 Department also strongly supports increasing the state's cannabis-related nuisance abatement
25 capacity by authorizing and supporting the Department of the Attorney General in civil
26 enforcement of violations of law. Adult-use legalization will not eliminate the illicit market or
27 bad actors. As experienced by other states, these will persist in parallel to the legal, regulated
28 market. A well-funded and defined law enforcement mission to prevent illicit activities and assist

1 the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office will help to ensure the viability of the legal market and
2 assure the public safety.

3 **Social Equity Program:** Increasingly, the promotion of social and economic equity in the
4 cannabis industry and through revenue generated by the cannabis industry has become a central
5 mission of states' programs. Acknowledging that equity can only be achieved through the
6 elimination of barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups,¹²² seventeen of
7 CANNRA's member states maintain equity programs ranging from specific license types to
8 grants and access to capital, technical assistance, community reinvestment, and business
9 incubator or mentorship programs for disproportionately impacted or disadvantaged
10 communities, people with past cannabis-related convictions, farmers, women-, veteran-, and
11 minority-owned businesses, legacy operators, etc. As such, the Department appreciates HB1246's
12 intent to address inequalities by bringing economic opportunity to disadvantaged regions of
13 Hawaii and transition illicit operators to the legal market through a robust social equity grant and
14 fee waiver program.

15 **Public Health Protections:** The intoxicating and impairing qualities of cannabis, manufactured
16 cannabis products, and certain hemp-cannabinoid products, has increased, and new and evolving
17 forms and modes of consumption continuously appear. As such, the Department strongly
18 supports the extensive, well-funded public health protections embedded in HB1246 and the clear
19 charge to the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office that "the protection of public health and safety
20 shall be the highest priorities for the office ...", and that whenever "protection of public health
21 and safety is inconsistent with other interests..., the protection of public health and safety shall be
22 paramount." Implementation of a robust public health and education campaign to inform the
23 public about the new laws and the health risks, as well as preparing for increased demand for
24 addiction and substance use treatment services, needs to begin before adult-use becomes effective
25 and continuously maintained to be assure the protection of the public health.

26 **Offered Amendments:** None

27 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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Figure 1a. Adults who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days by age, Hawaii State 2020, 2021, 2022

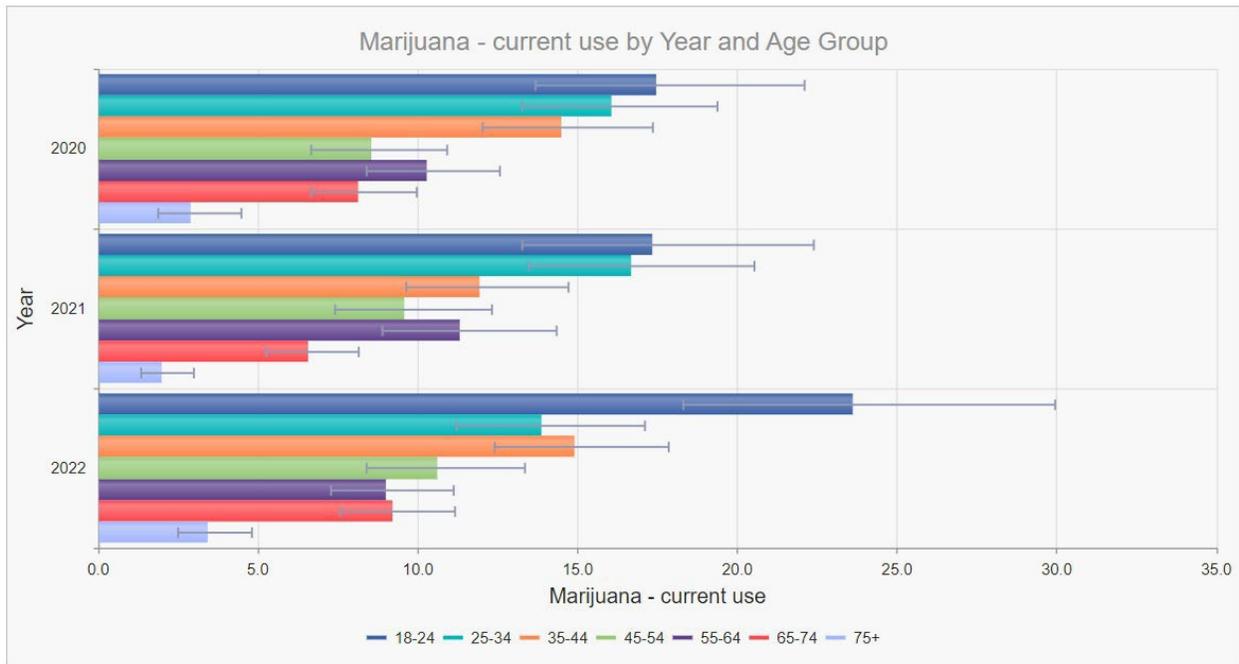


Figure 1b. Method of marijuana or cannabis use, Hawaii State 2020, 2021, 2022

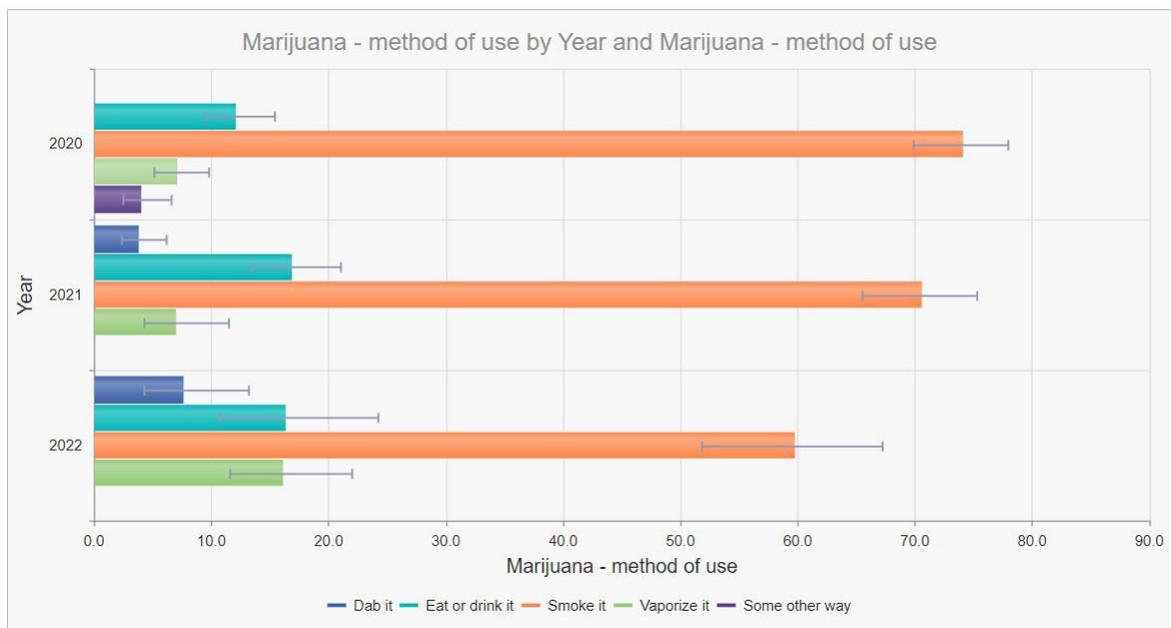
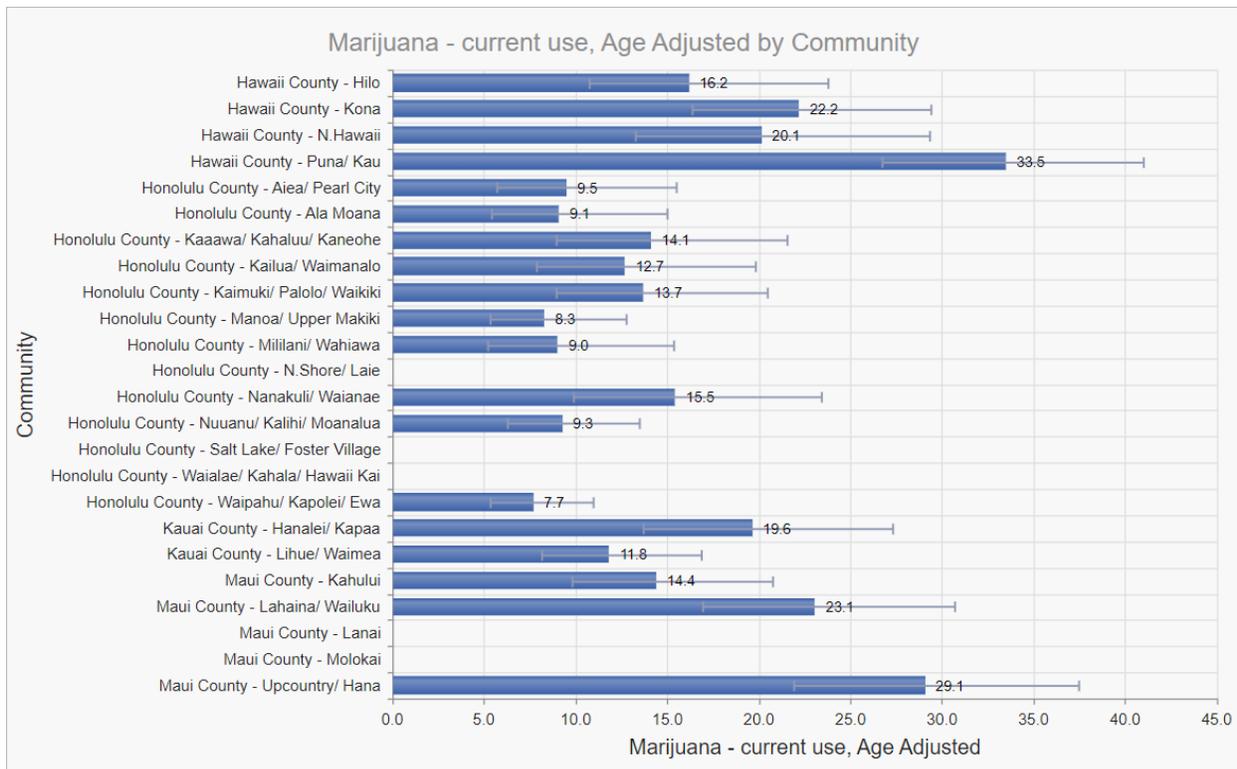


Figure 1c. Adults who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days by community, Hawaii State 2022



Source (Figures 1a, 1b, 1c): Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, <https://hhdw.org/data-sources/behavioral-risk-factor-surveillance-system/>

Figure 2a. School students who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days, Hawaii State, 2015–2023

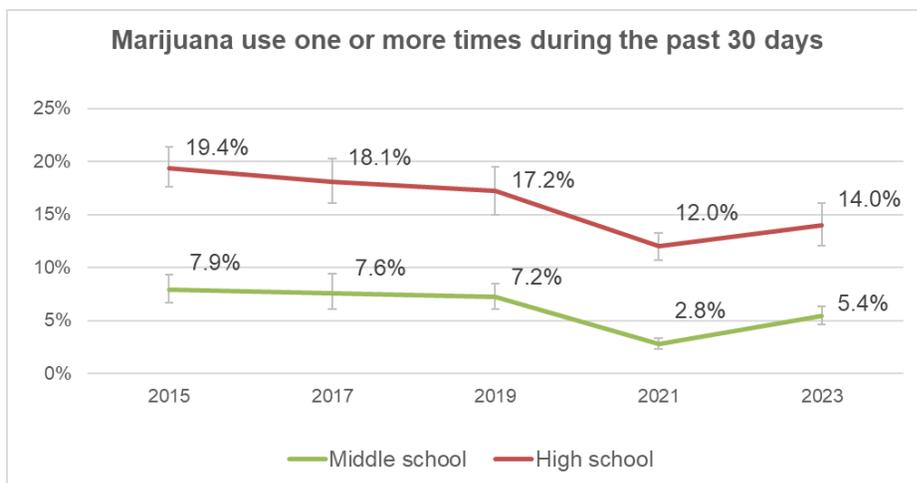
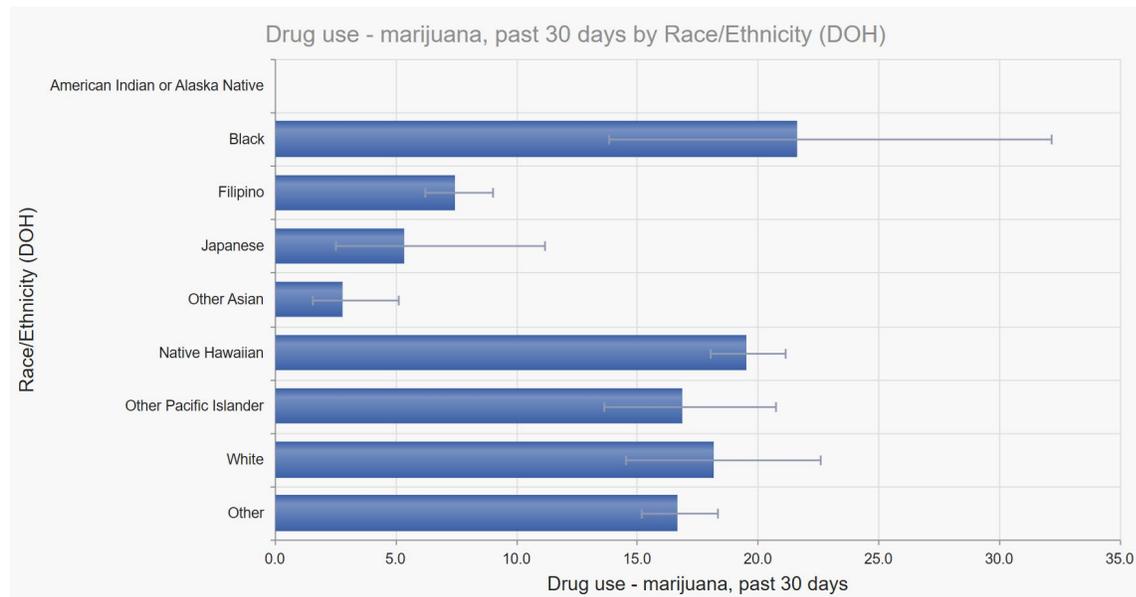


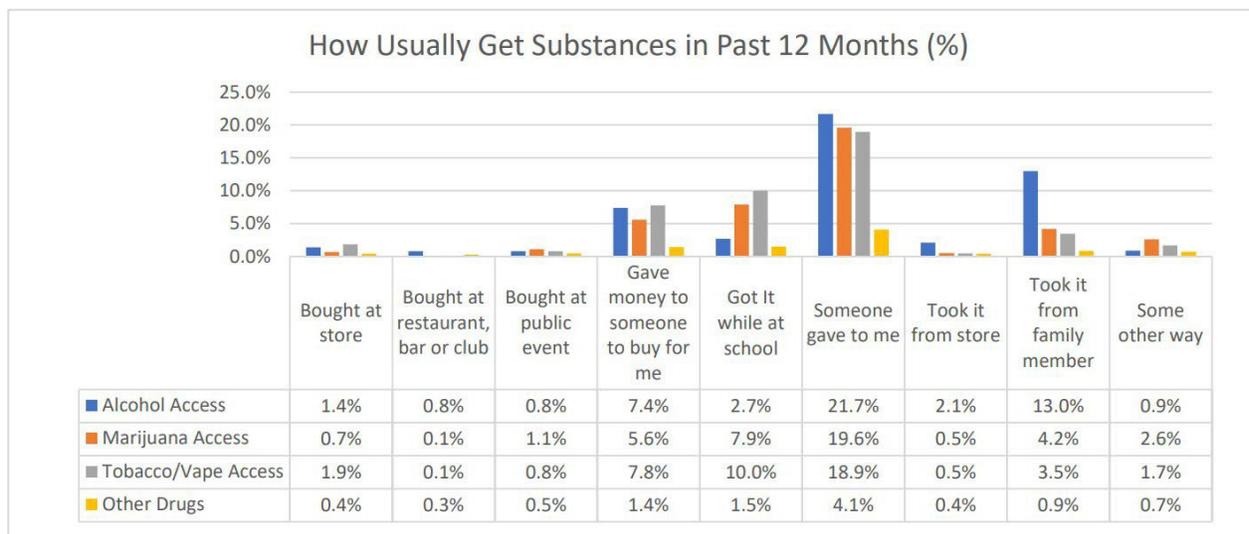
Figure 2b. High school students who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days by race/ethnicity, Hawaii State 2023



Source

(Figures 2a, 2b): Youth Risk Behavior Survey <https://hhdw.org/data-sources/youth-risk-behavior-survey/>

Figure 3. Percent of students accessing alcohol, marijuana, tobacco/vape products or other drugs through various means* in the past 12 months among youth grades 8th, 10th, 12th, Hawaii State 2019–2020



*“Some Other Way” for marijuana access: common responses included getting it from a dealer, growing it, or stealing it. Source: Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey (ATOD), <https://health.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2019-2020-Hawaii-ATOD-Survey-Statewide-Comprehensive-Report.pdf>

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HB NO.1246 RELATING TO CANNABIS

Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloe, and Committee Members,

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **SUPPORTS THIS BILL WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Office of the Public Defender, appreciates the great lengths the Office of the Attorney General, other agencies, the community, and the legislature have made to address the issue of personal cannabis use over the last several years. HB1246 represents the effort of many individuals in government, and we believe that it is appropriate to pass this law in consideration of the history of cannabis use criminal prosecution and what we now collectively understand regarding this drug.

We believe the behavior intended to repress; operating a motor vehicle under the influence of marijuana or a marijuana product; is adequately discussed in Hawaii Revised Statutes §291E-61. This statute has decades of case law and established legal practices for the introduction of evidence regarding the usage of any drug in the operation of a vehicle.

Hawaii Revised Statutes §291E-61 Operating a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant. (a) A person commits the offense of operating a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant if the person operates or assumes actual physical control of a vehicle:
(1) While under the influence of alcohol in an amount sufficient to impair the person's normal mental faculties or ability to care for the person and guard against casualty;
(2) *While under the influence of any drug that impairs the person's ability to operate the vehicle in a careful and prudent manner;*

SUGGESTED AMENDMENT

Deletion of PART IV, Section 5 through PART IV Section 9.

There is no necessity to create new crimes associated with the carrying of marijuana or marijuana products if the goal of HB1246 is to legalize the personal use of the drug.

PART IV seems to borrow language from Hawaii Revised Statutes 291-3.3 regarding “open containers.” Marijuana, unlike alcohol, is ordinarily stored in containers intended to be opened and closed without seals created by manufacturers. There is no legitimate way for an officer to determine whether a container with marijuana in it is carried by an individual is “open” under the proposed language. Passage of this proposal will lead to officers searching drivers or passengers of vehicles in violation of their due process rights as officers will use their discretion to find probable cause.

Similarly, there is no need to create new crimes regarding tetrahydrocannabinol, its usage by individuals under 21, its possession, or a complex system by which to introduce evidence using blood tests considering these practices will continue to be prohibited under law.

If the goal of HB1246 is to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use, the creation of new crimes associated with possession of the drug complicates and frustrates that intent. The use of any drug in the operation of a motor vehicle or in the perpetuation of any crime is highly regulated in Hawaii law.

If the legislature wishes to respond to community or law enforcement concerns regarding the personal use of marijuana; to reinstate prosecution in ways this bill intends to end; then that should be addressed in a separate bill in the future.

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
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KAHU MĀKA'I

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DEPUTY CHIEFS
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE ML-HR

February 4, 2025

The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
and Members
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems
House of Representatives
415 South Beretania Street, Room 325
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Tarnas and Kahaloa and Members:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 1246, Relating to Cannabis

I am Jerome Pacarro, Captain of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD opposes House Bill No. 1246, Relating to Cannabis.

The HPD opposes legislation that seeks to legalize the personal adult use of cannabis due to the Federal Schedule of Controlled Substances listing cannabis as a Schedule I controlled substance.

The HPD is concerned with allowing an increased availability of cannabis in the state as it will negatively impact public safety. Some areas of concern include the potential of an increased number of impaired drivers and the product's diversion. If this bill is passed, it will lead to broader availability of cannabis, making it easier for everyone to access, including juveniles.

The HPD urges you to oppose House Bill No. 1246, Relating to Cannabis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

Sincerely,



for Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police


for Jerome Pacarro, Captain
Narcotics/Vice Division

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
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STEVEN S. ALM
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
LOIO HO'OPI'I



THOMAS J. BRADY
FIRST DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

**THE HONORABLE DAVID A TARNAS, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i

February 3, 2025

RE: H.B. 1246; RELATING TO CANNABIS.

Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in **strong opposition** to House Bill 1246.

My name is Steve Alm, and I am the Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu. My number one job is protecting the people of Honolulu and that is why I am testifying against the legalization of this now very powerful drug, marijuana.

As public officials we should always, first and foremost, do no harm. Legalizing recreational (really commercial) marijuana, while making it easier for some people to get high, will result in a lot of harm for many others.

I am especially concerned about our keiki.

First, what kind of message will we be sending to our keiki about marijuana if it is legalized and the societal stamp of approval will be placed on its use? You will be telling our kids that marijuana is safe. Or it wouldn't be legal.

In fact, there are many harms associated with marijuana including marijuana use disorder; increased psychiatric disorders such as depression, suicidality, and schizophrenia; increases in car collisions and emergency and hospital admissions; impaired cognitive and memory functions, chronic vomiting (cannabis hyperemesis syndrome), environmental harms from illegal grow sites, loss of IQ, increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, and sharp increases in calls to poison centers for children who have eaten marijuana edibles which typically look like candy or sweets.

Second, all these harms are exacerbated as legalization has increased cannabis consumption in a big way. In 2000, 2.5 million Americans reported daily or near-daily use. By 2022, that number was up to 17.7 million and that is more than the 14.7 million Americans who reported using alcohol daily.

Third, the harms are further increased because the potency of marijuana is much higher now than in the past. Until 2000, the average potency of marijuana was 3 - 4% THC. Now marijuana stores typically sell marijuana in the 20 – 40% THC range with concentrates above 95%.

Fourth, recreational marijuana legalization has now been shown to increase the past-month use among teens and young adults. A study in the November 2024 issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry by authors from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Harvard Medical School did a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies to determine past-month use of marijuana by those aged 12-17 and those aged 18-25. They found that recreational marijuana laws were associated with a 13% increase in the first group and a 22% increase in the latter. The authors said that “the fact that analyses accounting only for more recent trends (i.e., studies using data after 2008) showed a significant increase in cannabis use among adolescents is alarming” noting that “neurodevelopment from adolescence continues into the early 20s and may be disrupted by chronic cannabis use.” They also said that “small changes in the prevalence of cannabis use can have large impacts in public health outcomes for this population.” Legalizing recreational marijuana will increase use by our kids and young adults and harm their mental development.

Finally, most of the consumption of marijuana is by daily or near-daily users. It is those addicts who consume 80% or more of the cannabis sold in the US. They will be the ones who will account for most of the tax revenue from marijuana legalization in Hawai'i.

Do we really want to be in the addiction for profit business? Do we want to teach our kids that? For a few extra tax dollars?

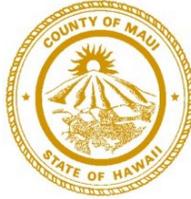
I encourage you all to do your own research, from reputable sources; and I believe you will come to the conclusion that legalizing this now very powerful drug is a bad bet for Hawai'i.

For the foregoing reasons, I am in **strong opposition** of H.B. 1246. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

ANDREW H. MARTIN
Prosecuting Attorney

SHELLY C. MIYASHIRO
First Deputy Prosecuting Attorney



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TESTIMONY ON
H.B. 1246
RELATING TO CANNABIS

February 3, 2025

The Honorable David A. Tarnas
Chair
The Honorable Mahina Poepoe
Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Kirstin Kahaloa
Chair
The Honorable Matthias Kusch
Vice Chair
and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kusch, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui respectfully submits the following comments **in opposition to H.B. 1246**, Relating to Cannabis, and requests that the measure be deferred. This measure amends significant portions of the H.R.S. to implement the legalization and regulation of hemp, non-medicinal cannabis and cannabis products.

We understand that the intent of this measure is to create and implement a regulatory system for both hemp and non-medical cannabis use. However, our unique role as prosecutors also requires us to ensure the integrity of the criminal justice system and preserve public safety. This measure raises the following concerns regarding the legalization of non-medical cannabis use:

1. Federal law currently designates cannabis as a Schedule I controlled substance, meaning that it generally cannot be manufactured, distributed, dispensed or possessed. The

proposed amendments to the H.R.S. will not alter that status, meaning that Hawai'i citizens who are involved in this industry will be in violation of federal law. Moreover, the current illegality of cannabis under federal law makes it harder for cannabis businesses to use traditional financial institutions. It also makes those businesses more vulnerable to theft, robbery, money laundering and other crimes due to their increased reliance on cash transactions.

2. Hawai'i has a significant lack of support services for both mental health and substance abuse issues. Legalization of non-medical cannabis use will not fix that problem, even if funds are allocated from cannabis sale taxation, and will in fact make it worse by making an existing intoxicant not only widely available, but heavily advertised. Furthermore, our county has spent decades trying to reduce the tragic consequences of crimes like DUI and drug-related violence and property crimes. Legalizing a psychoactive substance like cannabis for recreational use, even with built-in provisions addressing cannabis-related offenses, nullifies that work.

Relatedly, there are potential unforeseen consequences in implementing the bill's safe harbor provisions. For example, §A-4(b) allows strict compliance with the newly-created chapter to act as an affirmative defense to any prosecution involving marijuana or marijuana concentrate, while §A-5 (2) ostensibly prevents the chapter from being construed to supersede laws relating to performance of any task while impaired by cannabis that would constitute negligence or professional malpractice, or prevent the imposition of civil, criminal or other penalty for "the conduct." As drafted, the bill arguably would prevent prosecution for crimes like a burglary involving the theft of personal use quantities of marijuana from someone's home, assuming the offender strictly complied with the chapter. Further, as drafted §A-5(2) could be interpreted to only apply to conduct constituting negligence or professional malpractice, as opposed to other types of conduct such as the burglary example above.

3. While State and County employees are competent, diligent and hard-working, we believe that the creation of an effective state-wide regulatory scheme for the production and sale of a psychoactive substance for public consumption with no significant implementation or education delay is unrealistic, even with the transfer of existing personnel and assets from other state departments.

For these reasons, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui **opposes the passage of H.B. 1246 and requests that the measure be deferred.** Please feel free to contact our office at (808) 270-7777 if you have any questions or inquiries.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

735 Bishop Street, Suite 417

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: MISCELLANEOUS; Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office; Adult-Use Cannabis; Medical Cannabis

BILL NUMBER: HB 1246, SB 1613

INTRODUCED BY: HB by TARNAS, AMATO, BELATTI, HOLT, IWAMOTO, KAHALOA, KAPELA, KUSCH, LOWEN, MARTEN, MORIKAWA, POEPOE, TODD; SB by SAN BUENAVENTURA, Keohokalole

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Establishes the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis.

SYNOPSIS: Adds a new chapter to the HRS regarding cannabis. Provides that use in conformity with the new chapter is decriminalized. Establishes a Hawaii cannabis and hemp office. Establishes a Cannabis Regulation and Enforcement Special Fund. Provides for authorized conduct including medical use of cannabis. Provides for authorized personal adult use of cannabis. Provides for regulation and licensing of cannabis related businesses. Provides for authorized uses of hemp and businesses surrounding that product. Provides for a social equity grant program Provides for a public health and education campaign and grant program. Provides for a public safety grant program. Provides for a Hawaii hemp grant program.

Adds a new chapter to the HRS called the Hawaii Cannabis Tax Law. It imposes a 14% tax on the retail sale of cannabis and a 4% on retail sales of medical cannabis. This tax is in addition to any other tax that would apply.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, provided sections A-26 and A-51 through A-54 HRS and section 2 of this Act and Part 3 and sections 31, 32, 33 of this Act shall take effect on January 1, 2026.

STAFF COMMENTS: The question that should be asked is the purpose of this new tax. If the goal is to make people stop using cannabis by making it cost-prohibitive, then why are we legalizing it?

Certainly, the same can be said of other “sin taxes” that we impose on tobacco, liquor, and fossil fuel use.

As the Foundation's previous President, Lowell Kalapa, wrote in the Tax Foundation of Hawaii's weekly commentary on October 28, 2012:

Lawmakers seem to have a simplistic reaction to solving problems the solution to which plagues their constituents – tax it.

Probably the best example is what people like to call sin taxes, those excise taxes that are levied on tobacco and alcohol products. After all, smoking causes cancer and alcohol causes all sorts of problems including driving under the influence. Lawmakers and community advocates shake their heads and push for higher tax rates, arguing that making these products more expensive will deter folks from using these products.

The problem is that lawmakers also like the revenues that are generated from the sales of these products and, in some cases, they have tried to link the use and sale of these products with noble causes such as the funding of the Cancer Research Center that is currently being built. Again, the argument is that smokers should pay for programs and projects which seek to cure the related ill which in this case is cancer caused by smoking.

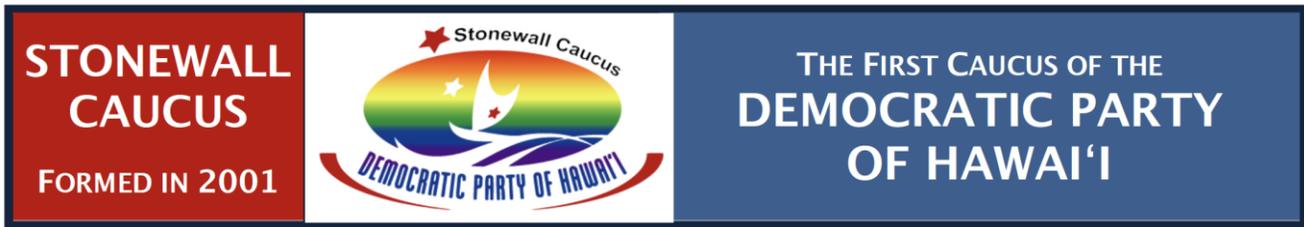
The irony is that arguments to increase the tax on tobacco and, more specifically, cigarettes, is a goal of getting smokers to quit while depending on the revenues from tobacco and cigarette taxes to fund an ongoing program, in this case the Cancer Research Center. So, which is it folks, stop smokers from smoking and if successful, there won't be any revenues to fund the Cancer Research Center?

The fact of the matter is that it appears that both locally and nationally, higher taxes on cigarettes are influencing smokers as tax collections on the sale of cigarettes have fallen. Certainly some of the decline is due to smokers actually quitting, but to some degree one has to suspect that some purchases were made via mail order from exempt Indian reservation outlets while others may be what is called gray market purchases, that is from sources outside the country.

What should come as a surprise is that most of the folks who have quit are of some means as they are more likely to recognize the health hazard caused by use of this product. That means most of those who are still smoking are among the lower-income members of our community. Thus, the tax is regressive, generating less and less collections from middle and higher-income individuals.

Kalapa, "Finding the Blame for What Ails You," at <https://www.tfhawaii.org/wordpress/blog/-2012/10/finding-the-blame-for-what-ails-you/> (Oct. 28, 2012).

If the policy choice is to legalize the activity, then it should be sufficient to tax it like any other business. If we add an extra tax to discourage the activity, isn't it being hypocritical? If we add an extra tax to pay for societal damage this activity causes, why aren't we accepting that we are causing the damage by allowing the activity?



TESTIMONY FROM THE STONEWALL CAUCUS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

January 30, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill [1246] Relating to Cannabis

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and esteemed Members of the Committees:

My name is Abby Simmons, Chair of the Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of our Caucus in strong support of HB 1246, which seeks to legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis in Hawai'i. This bill represents a crucial step toward modernizing our state's cannabis laws, supporting economic growth, and addressing long-standing issues of social equity and criminal justice reform.

Reasons for Supporting HB 1246:

1. Economic Benefits & Job Creation

The legalization of adult-use cannabis will create thousands of jobs in agriculture, retail, and related industries. States that have legalized cannabis, such as Colorado and California, have seen billions in tax revenue that support schools, healthcare, and infrastructure. This bill provides a regulated framework to ensure that Hawai'i can benefit from this new industry while maintaining strict oversight.

2. Criminal Justice Reform & Social Equity

For decades, cannabis prohibition has disproportionately impacted Native Hawaiian and other marginalized communities. HB 1246 addresses these injustices by:

- Expunging or reducing penalties for minor cannabis-related offenses.
- Creating a social equity program to assist those affected by past criminalization in entering the legal cannabis market.
- Redirecting law enforcement resources toward serious crimes, rather than minor cannabis infractions.

3. Consumer & Public Safety Protections

Prohibition has not eliminated cannabis use, but rather pushed it into an unregulated, underground market. Legalization will:

- Ensure product safety through strict testing and labeling requirements.
- Reduce the availability of unregulated, unsafe hemp-derived THC products currently being sold without oversight.
- Establish clear rules against sales to minors and impaired driving.

4. Supporting Hawaii's Agriculture & Local Economy

Hawai'i has the perfect climate for sustainable cannabis cultivation. By allowing regulated local production, we can:

- Support local farmers and small businesses instead of relying on imported products.
- Reduce illegal grows and environmental damage caused by unregulated operations.
- Encourage diversified agriculture by incorporating hemp alongside food crops, benefiting Hawaii's long-term sustainability.

HB 1246 is a well-structured, balanced approach to cannabis legalization that prioritizes economic opportunity, social justice, and public safety. By creating a legal framework that includes taxation, regulation, and public health initiatives, Hawai'i can reap the benefits seen in other states while avoiding common pitfalls.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HB 1246 and support a sensible, forward-thinking approach to cannabis policy in Hawai'i. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Abby Simmons (she/her)
Chair & SCC Representative
Stonewall Caucus
Democratic Party of Hawai'i
<https://linktr.ee/stonewalldph>

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:59:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvette Kay	Invisible Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha, my name is Yvette Kay, and I live in Kailua Kona. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true**public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!" Best Regards, Yvette Kay*

TO: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Representative Kristin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Mathias Kusch, Vice Chair

CONCERNING: HB 1246 Relating to Cannabis

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha, Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committees:

The Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii urges you to support **HB 1246**, which establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office and legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Legalization has been a core plank of the **Democratic Party of Hawaii's Platform since 2014**.

A majority of Hawaii residents favor the legalization of adult-use cannabis—ensuring access to **safe, regulated** products free of contaminants, with clear potency labeling, and available through legal, well-regulated channels. The experience in other states shows increasing acceptance: In California, senior cannabis use has grown from **1.4% to 9.8%**, and **58% of adults in Hawaii support legalization**. Among states with mature recreational cannabis markets, public support ranges from **81% to 64%**.

USE BY SENIORS

Kupuna increasingly seek cannabis for relief from **chronic pain, insomnia, and dementia**, yet current options in Hawaii remain limited.

Many seniors are reluctant to use opioids due to concerns about **dependency, overdose, and death**, while restrictive federal regulations make opioid access difficult. However, Hawaii's medical cannabis program has had **limited success**, with only **15% of cannabis users enrolled**—leaving **85% reliant on the illegal market**.

Seniors, in particular, are hesitant to engage with the illegal market due to:

- Uncertainty about **product purity and potency**
- Concerns about **personal safety** in illegal transactions
- The **stigma and difficulty** of accessing cannabis through unofficial sources

Legalization would allow **kupuna and their caregivers** to purchase cannabis safely, conveniently, and legally through regulated dispensaries.

TEEN USE & SAFETY

Kupuna also share concerns about **teen cannabis use**. The current illegal market exposes teens to:

- **Unregulated products** with unknown strength or contaminants
- **Drug dealers** who may introduce them to more harmful substances
- A culture of **disregard for the law**, as 85% of cannabis transactions occur illegally in Hawaii

In **19 out of 21 states** where cannabis has been legalized, **teen use has declined significantly**. Among high school seniors, usage rates dropped from **24% to 17%**, and among 10th graders, from **16% to 9%**.

HB 1246 dedicates a **portion of tax revenue** to **substance abuse prevention, child care, after-school and summer programs, and counseling**—reinforcing responsible cannabis policies and further reducing teen use.

MOVING FORWARD

It is time for Hawaii to move forward with a **safe, legal cannabis program**, as **31 other states have already done**. Legalization ensures **regulated access for adults**, protects **kupuna seeking relief**, and reduces **teen exposure to the illicit drug trade**.

We urge you to approve HB 1246 and support a safer, healthier Hawaii.

Mahalo,

Larry Smith, Chair of the Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii



HB1246 Cannabis Legalization
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Tuesday, Feb 4, 2025: 2:00: Room 325 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Opposes HB1246:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

HSAC opposes Cannabis legalization at this time, advocating strongly to implement a state-wide prevention program for kids first.

Focusing on cannabis prevention for kids before legalization is important because early education helps mitigate potential risks associated with youth cannabis use.

Prevention efforts focus on educating young people and their parents about these risks, promoting healthy alternatives, and reducing the likelihood of early use as a means to prevent short-term and long-term negative consequences:

1. **Avoiding Normalization** – If legalization happens before prevention, kids may see cannabis as completely safe and acceptable, increasing the likelihood of use. Prevention ensures they understand the risks and responsible decision-making.
2. **Parental & Community Readiness** – Educating kids before legalization allows parents, schools, and communities to establish clear expectations and guidelines about responsible behavior. Public health and education are more effective with interventions if there is time to develop a collaborative, comprehensive prevention campaign.
3. **Reassure the Community** – Assure the community that we have the capacity to address prevention and treatment for this issue to prevent the risk of harm to children and teenagers.

4. **Not Healthy for Young People** – Different than for adults, cannabis use causes serious, permanent harm on developing brains. Except for refractory epilepsy and seizure disorders, there is not an established beneficial use of cannabis for children that is greater than the harms.
5. **Brain Development Risks** – Adolescent brains are still developing, and cannabis use at a young age can have long-term effects to cognitive impairment, loss of IQ, memory, learning, underdeveloped decision-making, and mental health. Preventing early use helps avoid long-term cognitive impacts
6. **Mental Health** – Regular marijuana use has been linked to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and even psychosis in some individuals, particularly those with a family history of mental health disorders.
7. **Addiction Risk** – While not everyone who uses marijuana becomes addicted, about 9% of users (and up to 17% of those who start young) develop marijuana use disorder, leading to dependency and withdrawal symptoms.
8. **Increased Accessibility** – Legalization often leads to increased availability, which may indirectly lead to greater youth exposure. Prevention efforts help counteract this by educating kids before they encounter the substance.
9. **Prevention Reduces Use** – We can learn from other state’s strategies that early education and awareness campaigns can delay or reduce youth substance use, helping them make informed choices. Moreover, prevention can be a link for youth to access treatment, improving upon health support functions.
10. **Academic, Social, and Workplace Performance** – Marijuana use can impair cognitive function, focus, and motivation, potentially affecting school performance. Such impairments can continue for decades into adulthood, impacting their job productivity, and long-term career success. Misuse or dependency can strain relationships and social responsibilities.

By prioritizing education before legalization, society can create a more informed and prepared youth population, reducing potential harm while balancing the benefits of regulated cannabis markets.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.



HB1246 Cannabis Legalization

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair

Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

Wednesday, Feb4, 2025: 02:00pm: Room 325 Videoconference

Hina Mauka Opposes HB1246:

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS.
My name is Brian Baker. I am the Chief Operating Officer for Hina Mauka, a mental health and substance use disorder treatment and prevention agency for thousands of adults and adolescents on Oahu and Kauai, including recovery-oriented services and housing transitional living programs.*

Hina Mauka provides this testimony as a community treatment and prevention provider, as well as a member of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC).

We oppose HB1246 at this time, due to its lack of education to protect our keiki.

Focusing on cannabis prevention for kids ***before*** legalization is necessary, as early education has been proven to reduce use by kids, once legalization occurs.

Education of both parents and kids about the documented and proven harms of cannabis use by Hawaii's youth WILL help to avoid normalization, ensure that parents and our communities are ready to protect our keiki when legalization does happen, and will avoid significant financial and societal costs to our people.

Prioritize education NOW, to help
adult use legalization be successful!

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:09:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carie Lunsford	Medical Cannabis Advocates Maui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please make admendment to decriminalize all laws against concentrates, flower, seeds, the plant in general. Free the plant! Admendment to making new laws on drug testing, please do not create more regulation on cannabis, this is what has caused this situation we are in now. Open cannabis market, cannabis as agriculture. Zoned as agruculture.



TESTIMONY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
HB1246 RELATING TO CANNABIS
February 3, 2025, at 2:00 PM at the State Capitol Conference Room 325

Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe; and Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch, and Committee Members:

I support the use of medical cannabis. However, I do NOT support the use of non-medical (recreational) cannabis. According to Chapter 11-160, HAR-DOH Administrative Rules currently allows for the medical use of cannabis.

The Hawaiian Islands Republican Women are in STRONG OPPOSITION to HB1246.

HB1246 cites that many states have witnessed substantial benefits from the revenue generated through taxes, including use and licensing fees, as well as general excise and sales taxes on the non-medical adult-use cannabis industry. This revenue will:

- Establish the Hawaii cannabis and hemp office with 9 full-time positions
- Employ an Administrator appointed by the Governor which is another unelected bureaucrat
- Support funds needed for Public Safety Grants. More taxpayer dollars. More layers of government bureaucracy. Taxpayer money will be awarded to Non-Government Organizations to manage programs for safety training and behavioral health support services.

Danger to the Community. "Under federal law, non-hemp cannabis is an illegal drug and is classified as a schedule I controlled substance under the Uniform Controlled Substances Act."...: "In addition, there are practical difficulties in identifying individuals who may be impaired by cannabis while driving, including the lack of a cannabis analogue for a breathalyzer for alcohol."

- The prevalence of marijuana or marijuana-in-combination identified by Colorado State Patrol officers as the impairing substance in a DUI increased from 12% of all DUIs in 2014 to 31% in 2020. The prevalence of citations reported as marijuana-alone increased from 6.3% in 2014 to 8.7% in 2020, while marijuana-in-combination with alcohol or other drugs increased from 5.7% of citations in 2014 to 22.7% in 2020.
- The number of traffic fatalities where a driver tested positive** for any cannabinoid (Delta 9 or any other metabolite) increased 140%, from 55 in 2013 to 132 in 2019.

Health and Wellness.

- There was a significant rate increase of marijuana-related emergency department visits during the era of medical commercialization. The increase in visits continued after 2014 but that increase was reversed in 2019.
- The number of calls to poison control mentioning human marijuana exposure increased over the past 10 years. There were 41 calls in 2006 and 276 in 2019.

Source: <https://dcj.colorado.gov/news-article/colorado-division-of-criminal-justice-publishes-report-on-impacts-of-marijuana>

I encourage you to think about the decisions that you make today that will have an impact on families and future generations to come. Please vote NO on HB1246. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted, Jamie Detwiler, President, Hawaiian Islands Republican Women



Feb 4, 2025

Re Testimony Concerning Regulating Cannabis for Adult Use in Hawai'i

Re: Comments: HB 1246 - Cannabis Legalization

Position: Support

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch, and distinguished members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture Committees,

My name is Bryon Adinoff. I am the President of [Doctors for Drug Policy Reform](#), a group of several hundred physicians, other medical professionals, and scientists advocating for evidence-based drug policies and best practices that advance public health.

Prior to leaving full-time academia 5 years ago, I was the Distinguished Professor of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and for over 30 years I was an addiction psychiatrist in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I have [published](#) and spoken widely on the biological effects and treatment of addictive disorders and I am the Editor of [The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse](#). My research has been funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The medical professionals and scientists at D4DPR assert that the most significant detriment of cannabis lies in the severe consequences of arrests or imprisonment, profoundly impacting both individual and societal well-being. The ramifications of a cannabis-related arrest or conviction can endure a lifetime, hindering employment prospects, access to financial resources like car loans or mortgages, eligibility for student financial aid, and securing public housing. These adverse effects, stemming from cannabis prohibition, not only detrimentally affect an individual's mental and physical health but also reverberate through their family and community, with the most profound impact seen among those with limited means and belonging to disenfranchised groups.

Another pivotal reason we advocate for ending cannabis prohibition is to establish a secure and regulated system for cannabis cultivation, distribution, and sale. With more than 50% of the US population residing in states where adult-use cannabis is legalized, the positive outcomes of this system are evident.

As health professionals and scientists, we would like to emphasize some specific aspects of the bill that would support public health. Specifically:

- D4DPR has [spoken out](#) regarding the dangers of unregulated hemp-derived semi-synthetic intoxicating cannabinoids. HB 1246 will provide the state to set up a uniform

regulatory system to assure that all intoxicating cannabinoids will be regulated to assure consistency of product, accurate labeling, and protection of minors.

- A universal product symbol, recognized by a national consensus standard organization, will identify intoxicating cannabinoid. Also, laboratory testing, public education, child proof packaging, absence of cartoons in advertising, and investing in public health are all commendable aspects of the bill.
- As a [vast literature](#) now supports the finding that adolescents in cannabis legal states use *less* cannabis than either prior to cannabis legalization or compared to kids in non-legal states, the proposed bill will benefit the health of children in Hawai'i.

It is D4DPR's fervent belief that the legalization of adult-use cannabis genuinely enhances, rather than harms, the public health of Hawaiians.



Bryon Adinoff, MD

President, Doctors for Drug Policy Reform

(817) 371-9798 (m) | D4DPR.org | adinoff@d4dpr.org

712 H Street NE, Suite 1290, Washington, DC 20002





HOUSE BILL 1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS

FEBRUARY 4, 2025 · JHA/AGR HEARING

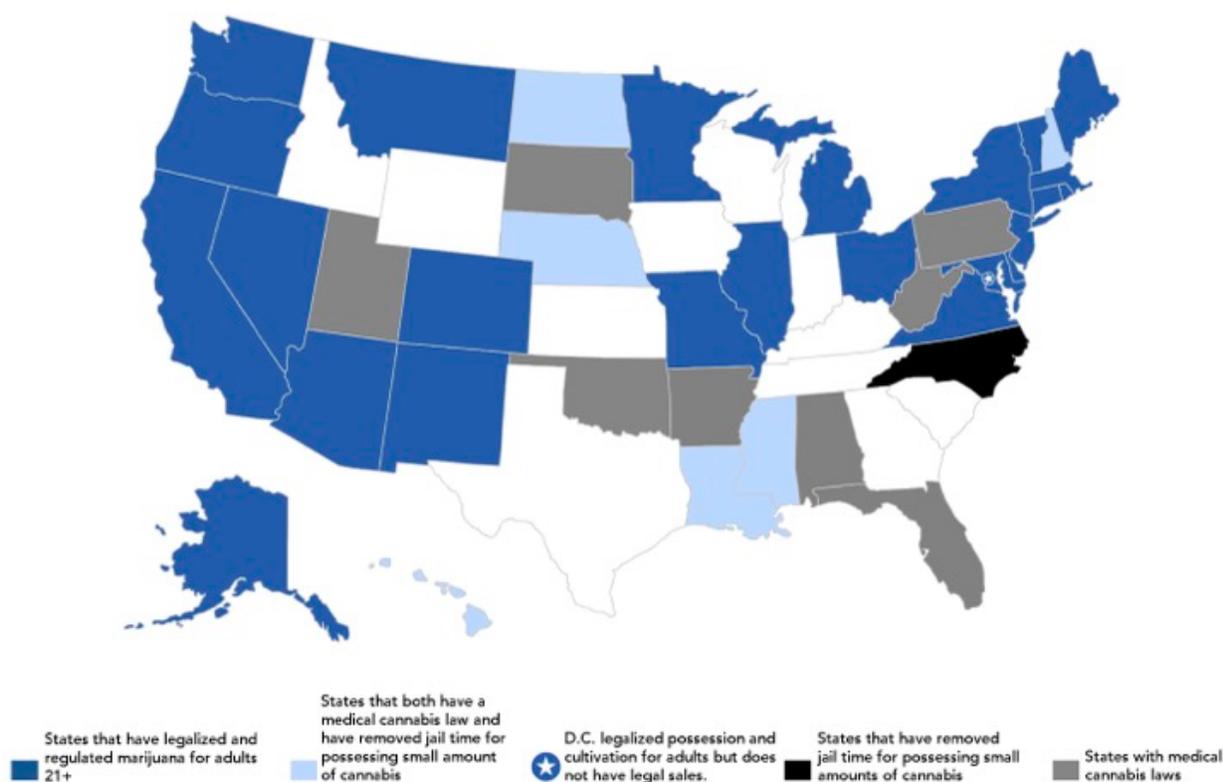
POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1246, relating to cannabis, which establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant; beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis; adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate; makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis; beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate; transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office; and establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis.

It is high time that Hawai'i stopped criminalizing people for ingesting a plant. **There are currently 24 states that have legalized recreational marijuana as of 2025, either by ballot measure or by legislative action.** While cannabis remains illegal under federal law, where it is classified as a Schedule I substance, the facts about cannabis consumption are clear. To begin, cannabis has a lower organic toxicity and addictive risk than alcohol, along with fewer correlating incidents of influence-related accidents and violence. More than half of all traffic fatalities in Hawai'i involve

alcohol, yet no one seriously discusses alcohol prohibition. In other words, alcohol is ingrained in our culture in a way that cannabis consumption is not, despite the former being more dangerous, statistically speaking, than the latter.

Cannabis Policy in the United States



Source: *Marijuana Policy Project*.

Similarly, cannabis dependence afflicts approximately 1.7 percent of the U.S. population, while alcohol abuse afflicts roughly 7.5 percent—over four times as many individuals. Cannabis is also not conclusively linked to an increase in violent behavior. Rather, reports supposedly linking cannabis to violent crimes typically rely on information gathered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which, in turn, relies on source material that a) does not account for drug-trafficking

and dispositional or psychological disorders; and b) fails to account for levels of deviancy (increased usage beyond average consumption rates). A starker statistical correlation exists between increased alcohol consumption and violent crime, including child and intimate partner abuse, yet, again, no one is introducing, much less considering the merits of, limiting the personal consumption of alcohol.

Additionally, only 30 percent of frequent (every other day or more) cannabis users report symptoms suggesting dependence in contrast to nearly 70 percent for nicotine and 88 percent for harder drugs, like cocaine, calling into question legal opinions asserting that cannabis and hard drugs can be readily correlated to one another. If we do not criminalize overconsumption of the more dangerous drug of alcohol, in and of itself, why, once more, do we unduly criminalize cannabis consumption, particularly in small amounts?

Legalizing recreational cannabis is an issue of restorative justice. As the visitor industry reaps record profits and supports expanding the local prison-industrial complex, people of Native Hawaiian ancestry, who comprise approximately 25 percent of the state's population, suffer the pangs of a biased criminal in-justice system. Approximately 39 percent of incarcerated detainees are Hawaiian, according to a comprehensive study by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, with the proportionality gap being even greater for Hawaiian women, who comprise 19.8 percent of the state's female population, but 44 percent of the state's female inmate population. Researchers also found that, on average, Hawaiians receive longer sentences, more parole revocations, and, importantly for this measure, harsher drug-related punishments than other ethnic groups, including for cannabis possession.

Legalizing recreational cannabis could generate at least \$81.7 million in tax revenue annually for our state according to a study published by the Hawai'i Cannabis Industry Association and would produce substantial additional criminal justice savings that could be spent delivering a quality public education to our keiki, building 21st Century school facilities, and disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. Even a more conservative \$50 million revenue estimate produced by the Hawai'i Department of Taxation is enough to “stand up” a local cannabis industry. Many states have established well-regulated recreational cannabis industries for less than \$5 million.

As we struggle to fix our state's overcrowded prisons, we must enact systemic solutions that promote social justice and help to alleviate Hawai'i's mass incarceration problem. If implemented sensibly, cannabis legalization could lead to the most comprehensive mass expungement program ever seen on our shores, with people who have been incarcerated for cannabis infractions having their criminal records expunged and being released from the legal constraints that have unjustly impeded their ability to attain financial security and, in many cases, stolen their basic freedom.

Social equity must form the heart of any forward-thinking cannabis legalization program. Our society's most marginalized people should be first in line to participate in the cannabis industry that we are seeking to grow. Agricultural and business practices should be based on regenerative, sustainable, and indigenous cultivation methods to ensure that cannabis operations uplift the needs and values of Hawai'i residents, not the profits of multistate corporations. **This cannot happen, however, if we fail to pass legalization at the state level before federal lawmakers take action to nationalize legalization, at which point multistate operators will be able to dominate our state cannabis industry and push local farmers out of the marketplace.**

We must legalize cannabis in a manner that is responsible and equitable for our island home.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, PRESIDENT OF THE RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
FEBRUARY 4, 2025
HB 1246 RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Good afternoon, Chair Tarnas and Chair Kahaloa and members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii was founded in 1901 and is a statewide, not for profit trade organization committed to supporting the growth and development of the retail industry in Hawaii. Our membership includes small mom & pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retail, department stores, shopping malls, on-line sellers, local, national, and international retailers, chains, and everyone in between.

We **STRONGLY OPPOSE** HB 1246. This measure establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant; beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis; establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis; adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate; makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis; beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate; transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office; establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis; and appropriates funds.

Despite states like California, Oregon and New York legalizing marijuana, this drug continues to be illegal under federal law and is considered a controlled substance like fentanyl or meth.

It is our understanding that the **tax revenue states bring in from legalized marijuana is less than 1% of the state budget as well as falling short of the expected revenue generated.** Colorado has shown that \$4.50 is the cost for every \$1 of tax revenue they brought in from legalizing Marijuana.

We also wonder if Hawaii has the capacity, the monies, and the infrastructure to take on those who become addicted to Marijuana as we understand that Hawaii rehab facilities are currently at maximum levels. **Many retailers have a zero tolerance for substances like marijuana that can be detected in urine for up to 30 days.** We are concerned about the safety of not only our customers but our employees. Especially in the back of the house, **employees use equipment that if impaired could cause injury to themselves or others.** This includes the use of forklifts, bailers, compactors, company cars and more. We do not want to see anyone injured or injuring others. [Smart Approach to Marijuana \(https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Report.pdf\)](https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Report.pdf) Study indicated **following legalization Emergency Room visits and admissions related to marijuana abuse in California is up 89%; Colorado marijuana-related hospitalizations per 100,000 since legalization have increased 148%; and 1 in 4 road deaths in Colorado involved Marijuana.**

While we understand that this measure is for recreational use, we also know that it will be more readily available, and employees could still come to work high by inhaling or ingesting it before their shift or on their break. [Smart Approach to Marijuana \(https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Report.pdf\)](https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Report.pdf) Study indicated that **30% of marijuana users have some form of marijuana use disorder.** There are many health risks associated with marijuana use, including respiratory problems from smoking and potential negative impacts on mental health, such as increased risk of psychosis or exacerbation of existing mental health conditions. It also could impair one's cognitive and motor functions, which can increase the risk of accidents and injuries. **Employees who use marijuana recreationally may experience decreased productivity, absenteeism, and increased workplace accidents.** This can be a concern for employers and the economy as a whole.

Hawaii continues to be dependent on tourism, especially from Japan. During a meeting, this past summer that the Honolulu Prosecutor put on, we heard from the **Japanese tour wholesalers that if Hawaii legalizes marijuana, Japanese visitors will find other destinations to visit and stop coming to Hawaii. And Hawaii is very dependent on our visitors from Japan.** This would have an enormous impact on retailers as well as the General Excise Tax – No Japanese Tourist = No Spending = Stores closing = loss of tax revenue.
Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.



Cultivation Sector Consulting, LLC

150 Mahiai Place

Makawao, HI 96768

TO: Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Jennifer Martin, Member/Manager
Cultivation Sector Consulting, LLC

RE: HB 1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS.

DATE: Tuesday February 4, 2025

TIME: 2:00 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE; Conference Room 325

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe and members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs:

My name is Jennifer Martin, sole member and manager of Cultivation Sector Consulting, LLC. I have been active in the cannabis industry since 1996 and have been a consultant in Hawai'i, operating locally and internationally as a cannabis cultivation, licensing and operations expert since 2017.

Cultivation Sector Consulting **supports** SB1246, which legalizes adult-use cannabis.

Concerns Related to the Licensing Process

I am opposed, however, to a specific provision which puts a successful licensing process in jeopardy:

- On page 34 of the draft bill, lines 9-10, the method for licensing is meant to be determined by the regulatory agency, "including by randomized lottery selection". A lottery based licensing process does not work for cultivation or manufacturing license types due to the fact that these license types involve years of skill development before they can be competently done, and Hawaii already has an active and competent underground network of cannabis growers and manufacturers who should be first in line to become licensed operators if the black market is to be kept from outcompeting the legal market. I suggest removing the words, "including by randomized lottery selection" from page 34, lines 9 and 10 of the current draft bill.

The "Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office" that will be created will have the power to determine the number of licenses to be awarded, as well as the method to award them. Specifying the prioritization of helping "legacy growers" get licensed, and ensuring that a large number of licenses will be available with non-onerous application requirements will be critically important to the success of the program. If legacy growers feel left out, they will continue to supply the market that is already active in the state, significantly reducing demand for the legal entities that this law will create.

If the legislature or regulatory agency has the flexibility to make it so, allowing legacy growers to be licensed to operate on the agriculturally zoned properties where many of them already reside would further support a smooth transition from black market growing and selling to fully legal participation.

Last, I would like to suggest an approach of regulatory compliance that regulates cannabis like alcohol, such that the regulatory burden on the legal cannabis industry will be affordable and not overly onerous. This is important to keep costs down for legal operators, in case they do encounter cost pressure from the black market and the voluminous amount of illegally imported California cannabis that has been flooding the market in Hawaii for several years already. The typical method of regulating cannabis in other states is more akin to pharmaceuticals than to alcohol, but the comparison of cannabis to alcohol is a more accurate match and will lead to a more reasonable and affordable cannabis regulatory system.

Thank you for your time,

Jennifer Martin



Submitted Online: Monday, February 3, 2025
Page One of Three

TO: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Representative David Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

FROM: Eva Andrade, President

RE: Opposition to HB 1246 Relating to Cannabis

Hawai'i Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawai'i. As such, we have serious concerns about this bill and its ultimate ramifications on the wider community—especially concerning our keiki. While we leave discussions regarding regulatory functions and applicability to the experts, we firmly believe that legalizing recreational marijuana is a serious and dangerous policy shift that will negatively impact our community.

Increased Marijuana Use Post-Legalization.

Marijuana use after legalization will lead to an increase, not a decrease, in marijuana use. According to Jonathan P. Caulkins in *The Real Dangers of Marijuana* (2019), “[o]ne could speculate that legalization might make marijuana abuse and dependence less common, because generally healthy people will start to use occasionally, and that influx could dilute the proportion who abuse or are dependent. But one could just as easily speculate that legalization will bring more marketing, more potent products (like ‘dabs’), or products that are more pleasant to use (like ‘vaping’ pens), any of which could increase the risk that experimenting could progress to problematic use.” This increased usage & wider availability suggests that marijuana will cause abuse and dependence at a higher rate.ⁱ

Concerns About High Potency Marijuana

One of the most alarming developments in marijuana use is the dramatic increase in potency. In recent years, THC levels in marijuana products have risen significantly, far exceeding the levels seen in previous decadesⁱⁱ. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, today’s marijuana can contain THC levels as high as 90% in concentrated products, compared to 2-4% in the 1990sⁱⁱⁱ. High-potency marijuana has been linked to increased risks of addiction, psychosis, anxiety, and cognitive impairments, particularly in adolescents whose brains are still developing. The introduction of these potent forms of marijuana into Hawai'i’s market will likely have severe consequences for public health, increasing both dependency rates and mental health crises among young users.

Edible Marijuana Products Pose a Significant Risk to Keiki

The rise of edible marijuana products presents a major unintended consequence, regardless of packaging requirements. According to Smart Approaches to Marijuana^{iv}, youth drug use has increased in every state that has legalized recreational marijuana. Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics has reported that “[t]here has been a consistent increase in pediatric edible cannabis exposures over the past five years, with the potential for significant toxicity.”^v

6301 Pali Highway, Kaneohe, HI. 96744-5224. | 808.203.6704
www.hawaiifamilyforum.org | info@hawaiifamilyforum.org

Prioritize Hawai'i's Vaping Epidemic. Despite the legislature's continued efforts to curb vaping among youth, significant challenges persist. The alarming rates of youth engagement with illegal substances—even amid stricter regulations—underscore the ineffectiveness of current preventive measures. Marijuana concentrates are already being used in vaping devices, and the DEA has recognized^{vi} that these products contain much higher THC concentrations than traditional marijuana. Since marijuana impairs cognitive and motor functions, school-aged keiki who access it will be at a distinct disadvantage academically and socially.

Harm to Children's Safety and Emotional Well-Being

Legalizing commercial marijuana will significantly impact keiki's perception of its safety and acceptability. Research shows that family dynamics play a crucial role in adolescent substance use, often acting as both safeguards and risk factors^{vii}. There are numerous instances of young people accessing illegal substances through adults in their households, sometimes under the guise of "medicinal" purposes. Legalizing recreational marijuana will likely exacerbate this issue, making marijuana more accessible to minors.

By passing this legislation, we risk sending a dangerous message to our youth—that marijuana use carries little to no risk. This perception could lead to increased use among adolescents, further complicating efforts to curb youth substance abuse.

Marijuana Impairs Judgment, Motor Function, and Reaction Time

Studies show a direct correlation between THC concentration and impaired driving abilities. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "[t]esting for drug impairment is problematic due to the limitations of drug-detecting technology and the lack of an agreed-upon limit to determine impairment. The nationally recognized level of impairment for drunk driving is .08 g/mL blood alcohol concentration, but there is no similar national standard for drugged driving."^{viii}

Potential Revenue Is Not Worth the Risk

Supporters of marijuana legalization often cite the potential for increased tax revenue as a justification for legalization. However, the financial benefits are outweighed by the social and economic costs associated with increased marijuana use. States that have legalized marijuana have seen rising public health costs, increased emergency room visits, workplace safety concerns, and higher rates of substance abuse treatment admissions. Furthermore, the costs of addressing impaired driving incidents, mental health crises, and youth drug prevention programs will likely exceed any revenue gained^{ix}. Hawai'i cannot afford to jeopardize the well-being of its people—especially our keiki—simply for the promise of financial gain.

Conclusion: Prioritize Community Health and Safety

The push for marijuana legalization overlooks serious concerns that demand immediate attention. Foremost among these is the certainty that legalization will increase marijuana use, not reduce it. Before considering legalization, we must first address the ongoing vaping epidemic, which continues to affect our youth. Additionally, the risks posed by edible marijuana products, their impact on children's safety and emotional well-being, and the dangers of impaired judgment and motor function must not be ignored.

We appreciate that lawmakers have attempted to address some of these concerns in this bill. However, despite these efforts, the overall community does not want to take that chance with our keiki. The health and safety of our children and the broader community must take precedence over the rush to legalize recreational marijuana.

We urge lawmakers to weigh these critical issues carefully before making a decision that could unleash long-term harm on Hawai'i's families—opening a door that, once ajar, can never be closed.

ⁱ Caulkins, J. P. (n.d.). The Real Dangers of Marijuana. National Affairs. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-real-dangers-of-marijuana>

ⁱⁱ Stuyt, E. (2018). The Problem with the Current High Potency THC Marijuana from the Perspective of an Addiction Psychiatrist. *Missouri Medicine*, 115(6), 482. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6312155/>

ⁱⁱⁱ NIDA. Cannabis (Marijuana). National Institute on Drug Abuse website. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/cannabis-marijuana>. September 24, 2024 Accessed January 23, 2025.

^{iv} Caulkins, J. P. (2020, December 20). *Lessons Learned from State Marijuana Legalization*. Learn About Sam. Retrieved February 13, 2023, from <https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-Impact-Report1.pdf>

^v (n.d.). *SAM Frequently Asked Questions*. SAM Smart Approaches to Marijuana. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://learnaboutsam.org/faq/#sam19>

^{vi} (2019, May 8). *Vaping and Marijuana Concentrates*. DEA.gov. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/VapingMarijuana_Brochure_2019_508.pdf

^{vii} Loke, A. Y. (2013). Family Process and Peer Influences on Substance Use by Adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10(9), 3868. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph10093868>

^{viii} National Conference of State Legislators (2022, November 11). *Drugged Driving | Marijuana-Impaired Driving*. NCSL. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.ncsl.org/transportation/drugged-driving-marijuana-impaired-driving>

^{ix} Brown, Jason P., Elior D. Cohen, and Alison Felix. 2023. "Economic Benefits and Social Costs of Legalizing Recreational Marijuana." Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Research Working Paper no. 23-10, September. Available at <https://doi.org/10.18651/RWP2023-10>



February 3, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB 1246

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch, and distinguished members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture Committees,

My name is Karen O'Keefe. I am the director of state policies for the nonprofit Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest cannabis policy reform organization in the nation. We urge you to report HB 1246 favorably so that Hawai'i can join the 24 other states that have legalized cannabis for adults 21 years of age and older. We also urge you to adopt the amendments recommended by the Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Regulation to more explicitly prioritize legacy operators.

Nineteen percent of Hawai'i adults admit having used cannabis in the past year,¹ while only 2.6% are registered patients.² That means more than 16% of Hawai'i residents are lawbreakers in the eyes of their state for conduct most voters believe should be legal.³ Adults should not be punished for using a substance that is safer than alcohol,⁴ and which — for many — is an over-the-counter medicine for pain, anxiety, and insomnia.⁵

HB 1246 would stop punishing adults for responsibly using cannabis, while prohibiting impaired driving, consuming cannabis while driving, and public smoking. It would put in place public health and consumer protection regulations to enhance safety. And it can conservatively be expected to generate more than \$50 million in new tax revenue per year once the market is mature, which it invests in public education, public safety, and youth development.

I. Consumer protection regulations are only possible with legalization.

Prohibition harms health and safety by making control impossible.

¹ [Interactive NSDUH State Estimates](#), "Marijuana Use in Past Year Among Adults Aged 18 or Older, by State: 2021-2022," U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Accessed January 2, 2025.

² Hawaii Department of Health, [December 2024 Data Report](#), (showing 29,822 patients); Hawaii's adult population is 1.15 million.

³ [Hawai'i Perspectives Winter 2023 Report](#).

⁴ See, i.e. "Facts About U.S. Deaths from Excessive Alcohol Use," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. *The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: Current state of evidence and recommendations for research*. Washington D.C.: The National Academies Press, Conclusion 4-1, p. 221 ("Although the available evidence suggests that cannabis use is not associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality, the limited nature of that evidence makes it impossible to have confidence in these findings." "There is insufficient evidence to support or refute a statistical association between self-reported cannabis use and all-cause

⁵ "Cannabis Consumers in America 2023, Part 1: An Overview of Consumers Today," New Frontier Data, p. 12.

Because Hawai'i is a prohibition state, the cannabis most Hawai'i consumers purchase is illegal and thus unregulated, putting consumers at risk of hazardous pesticides, heavy metals, molds — and even lacing with hard drugs such as fentanyl.⁶

In recent years, following a 2018 change in federal hemp policy, there has been a proliferation of sales of intoxicating hemp-derived cannabinoids in Hawai'i. According to testimony at the informational briefing, at least 40 stores in Hawai'i are openly selling intoxicating “hemp” products in the state and lab tests show they often contain far more THC than was allowed in the state's medical cannabis program. They also have flashy packaging that is prohibited by HB 1246.

HB 1246 would provide consumers with a safer alternative to both illicit cannabis and potent “gas station cannabis” that is widespread in Hawai'i now. It mandates rules on lab testing, sanitation, health and safety, labeling, dosages, and potency, and requires packaging to be opaque, a single color with no graphics, child-resistant, and resealable. It requires warnings on the products and on flyers in cannabis stores, and bans hazardous and detrimental products.

HB 1246 would also move intoxicating hemp under the same regulatory authority as cannabis. As Assistant Attorney General Andrew Goff testified at your informational briefing, it would provide resources to the AG's new tools to tackle the problem — including funding for nuisance abatement and allowing civil actions and the seizure of potentially hazardous products that break the rules.

II. Youth cannabis use has decreased in most legalization states.

Under prohibition, high schoolers often have the easiest access to cannabis. On the eve of states beginning to legalize cannabis in 2012, a Columbia University researchers survey of high schoolers found 40% knew a peer who sold cannabis.⁷ Only 1% knew a peer who sold alcohol. Legalization moves cannabis sales out of schools and the streets and into the regulated, adult-only stores.

When states started legalizing cannabis, some feared youth marijuana use would increase. We now have more than a decade of data, and the opposite has happened. In 19 of the 21 states that have legalization laws old enough to have before-and-after data, high schoolers' marijuana use has decreased.⁸ (In the other two states, the “before” year was 2021 — which was during COVID shutdowns which significantly impacted use rates.)

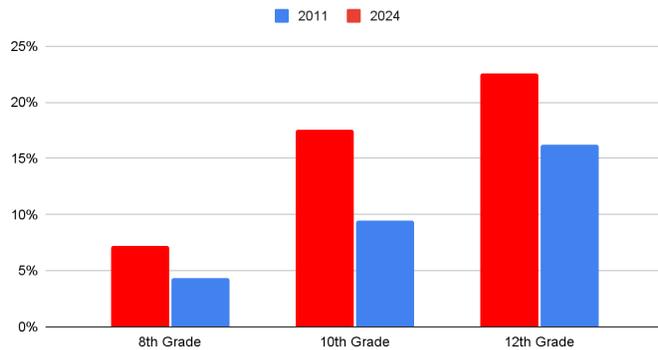
⁶ See: Botelho, Diane & Boudreau, April & Rackov, Andrien & Rehman, Attiq & Phillips, Bruce & Hay, Cathy & Broad, Karen & Crowhurst, Peter & Cockburn, Sara & Smith, Troy & Balonova, Barbora. (2021). Analysis of Illicit and Legal Cannabis Products for a Suite of Chemical and Microbial Contaminants; “Unintentional use of fentanyl attributed to surreptitious cannabis adulteration,” Hopwood, Taylor et al. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association, Volume 60, Issue 6, e370 - e374

⁷ “National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XVII: Teens,” The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2012, p. 2.

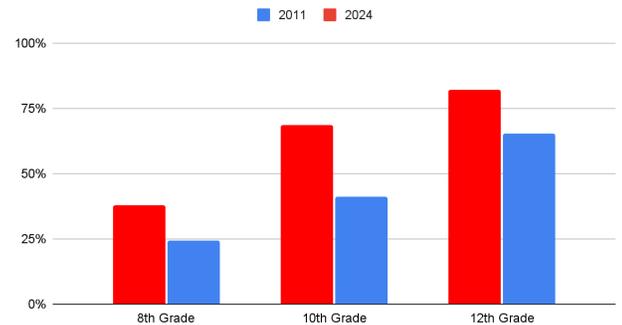
⁸ For citations and charts with the full before-and-after data, see: “Adult-Use Cannabis Legalization Corresponds With Drops in Teen Use,” Marijuana Policy Project.

Nationwide, government data from both the CDC and the University of Michigan’s Monitoring the Future report shows as the nation went from zero legalization states to 24, teen marijuana use has dropped significantly.⁹ Monitoring the Future’s survey data also shows the percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who report cannabis is fairly easy or very easy to get has dropped dramatically.¹⁰

MTF Past 30 Day Marijuana Use



MTF: Marijuana "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain



Moving cannabis sales from streets and schools to adult-only stores has been accompanied by reduced access and use of cannabis by youth. On the illegal market, no one is checking IDs before selling marijuana. In contrast, licensed cannabis stores have overwhelming compliance with age-gating.¹¹ As part of legalization, a portion of cannabis taxes are often directed to education and prevention, such as after-school activities.

While middle schoolers and high schoolers are using cannabis at lower rates, seniors in legal states are finally able to try a lab-tested product that many find preferable to pain medications and sleep-aids. The age group that saw the most significant increase in cannabis use in Colorado was people older than 65. Their use of cannabis more than tripled to 9.3%.¹²

II. Cannabis Legalization Grows the Economy via Taxes, Jobs, and Tourism

In addition to moving sales off the streets and into adult-only stores, legalization has brought in considerable revenue that has allowed states to invest more in their priorities — which have included education, substance abuse treatment and prevention, and youth

⁹ [High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data](#), CDC, 1991-2023.

¹⁰ [National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2024](#), Monitoring the Future.

¹¹ Carla J. Berg, Katelyn F. Romm, Alexandria Pannell, Priyanka Sridharan, Tanvi Sapra, Aishwarya Rajamahanty, Yuxian Cui, Yan Wang, Y. Tony Yang, Pat [Annual Reports | Monitoring the Future](#) Ricia A. Cavazos-Rehg, Cannabis retailer marketing strategies and regulatory compliance: A surveillance study of retailers in 5 US cities, Addictive Behaviors, Volume 143, 2023, 107696, ISSN 0306-4603, See additional sources at: "Study: Licensed Cannabis Retailers Are Strictly Complying with ID Verification Laws," NORML, April 5, 2023. Available at: <https://norml.org/blog/2023/04/05/study-licensed-cannabis-retailers-are-strictly-complying-with-id-verification-laws>

¹² "Impacts on Marijuana Legalization in Colorado", Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2021. P. 4.

development. Through 2023, states' adult-use cannabis taxes have raised \$20 billion, with \$4 billion generated in 2023 alone.¹³

My home state, Michigan, brought in \$473 million in cannabis sales taxes in 2023, with a 10% cannabis excise tax plus a 6% standard sales tax.¹⁴ Fifteen percent of the excise tax revenue is allocated to the city or town where sales occur. One township with a population of under 14,000 was able to buy a \$842,000 fire fighting rig it desperately needed using its cannabis tax revenue.¹⁵

You can arrive at a fairly conservative estimate of cannabis tax revenue by adjusting Nevada's excise tax revenue for Hawai'i's population and visitors and HB 1246's tax rate. In the first full year of sales, using this methodology, would result in \$33 million in cannabis sales taxes, with tax revenue exceeding \$50 million each year starting in year three.¹⁶

While the bill allows for regulatory costs to be covered before allocations are made, in practice, the entirety of the tax revenue should be available for the state's needs. HB 1246 directs the regulatory office to include licensing and application fees at amounts sufficient to cover the costs of regulation. Smaller states typically spend \$3-5 million per year in regulatory costs.¹⁷

In addition to tax revenue, adult-use legalization can also create thousands of new jobs. Adjusting for population, based on Leafly and Vangst cannabis jobs reports for Nevada, Hawai'i can expect upwards of 5,000 new cannabis industry jobs.¹⁸

Some opponents have claimed Hawai'i's tourism industry would be negatively impacted, and "Japanese tourists will stop coming to Hawaii. Full stop."¹⁹ If you look at the experience of legalization states, you'll see that those fears are not warranted.

¹³ Details and citations available at "Cannabis Tax Revenue in States that Regulate Cannabis for Adult Use," Marijuana Policy Project www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/cannabis-tax-revenue-states-regulate-cannabis-adult-use/

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ "Marijuana tax money foots bill for Michigan township's new \$800K firetruck," MLive, April 25, 2024.

¹⁶ "Cannabis Tax Revenue," Nevada Department of Taxation, FY 2017, FY 2018, FY 2019, FY 2020. Calculated by multiplying the "10% State Retail Cannabis Excise Tax" row by 1.4 to adjust for HB 1246's 14% rate and dividing by two to adjust for Hawai'i's lower population and average daily visitors. Feel free to email kokeefe@mpp.org for the spreadsheet.

¹⁷ New Mexico, population 2.1 million had \$4 million in regulatory costs in FY 2023 (<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/23%20Regular/final/HB0002.pdf>, appropriations page 54); Maine, population 1.4 million, had \$3.1 million in regulatory costs in 2023

(www.maine.gov/dafs/ocp/sites/maine.gov.dafs.ocp/files/inline-files/Final%202023%20AUCP%20Annual%20Report.pdf (p.21)), Montana, population 1.1 million, had \$4.5 million in regulatory costs in FY 2024

(<https://archive.legmt.gov/content/Publications/fiscal/2025-Biennium/Resources-and-Guides/Marijuana-Brochure.pdf>); Rhode Island, population 1 million, had regulatory costs of just over \$3 million in FY 2024

(<https://dbr.ri.gov/office-cannabis-regulation/data>); Vermont population 647,800, had regulatory costs in FY 2023 \$3.5 million, including \$700,000 for an IT system

(<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/House%20Ways%20and%20Means/Bills/H.740/%7EStephanie%20Barrett%7ESenate%20Cannabis%20Funding%20Construction%7E5-4-2022.pdf>),

¹⁸ "How Many Jobs Depend on Legal Cannabis in 2017? We Did the Math" Leafly, Jan. 5, 2017 (estimates 2,295 cannabis jobs in 2016, pre-legalization); "Jobs Report 2024 Positive growth returns" Vangst (estimates 12,825 cannabis jobs in Nevada in 2023, that is a net increase of 10,530 since 2016); Hawai'i's population plus average daily visitors is half of Nevada's (1.67 million, compared to Nevada's 3.324 million)

¹⁹ <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2023/10/08/editorial/island-voices/column-legalizing-marijuana-will-cause-harm/>

After Colorado voters made their state the first to legalize cannabis in 2012, tourism set records. In 2019, the Colorado Tourism Office reported that Colorado continued a nine-year streak of record-setting growth in visitors, traveler spending, and tax generation in 2018.²⁰ (It hit a record again in the most recent year with data, 2023.) In 2016, a survey from the Colorado Tourism Office found that 49% of visitors consider legalization when deciding to visit.²¹

After Hawai'i, California is host to the second most tourists from Japan. California voters legalized cannabis in November 2016 and sales began on January 1, 2018. Tourism thrived there, too, post-legalization — *including tourism from Japan*. The year after legal sales began, in 2019, tourism to California hit a record.²² Tourism crashed during COVID shutdowns, but tourism to California has rebounded since then and hit a new record in 2023. While tourism from Japan to California has not fully rebounded post-COVID, Visit California data shows tourism from Japan *increased* in 2016 and 2019.²³

In reality, Hawai'i is likely already missing out on tourists due to its policy of prohibition. Nineteen percent of Americans admit to having used cannabis in the past year,²⁴ and 15% do so at least monthly.²⁵ Just as most people who enjoy alcohol wouldn't want to vacation in a dry county, many cannabis consumers factor in the legal status when deciding where to travel. This is particularly the case since survey data shows that for most cannabis consumers.

III. Concluding Thoughts

While cannabis is not risk-free, it is far less dangerous than alcohol and some medications.²⁶ HB 1246 would appropriately educate consumers — and youth — about risks, but then treat adults like grown ups who are allowed to make their own decisions about the plant.

²⁰ "Colorado Tourism Sets All-Time Records for Sixth Consecutive Year," Colorado.com June 28, 2017. <https://www.colorado.com/news/colorado-tourism-sets-all-time-records-sixth-consecutive-year>

²¹ See: Jason Blevins | "Marijuana has huge influence on Colorado tourism, state survey says," The Denver Post, Oct. 2 2016.

²² www.gov.ca.gov/2024/05/05/at-the-top-of-the-golden-gate-bridge-governor-newsom-announces-tourism-spending-hit-an-all-time-high-in-california/

²³ "California Travel-Related Spend & Visitation Forecast," Visit California. (There were 537,000 visits from Japan to California in 2016, the year when California legalized — in November. That figure increased to 559,000 in 2019. Beginning in 2020, tourism crashed due to COVID. It is slowly rebounding. To access the data, click on "download report (XLS)." Unhide columns C-M. The data is row 21-5) Accessed Jan. 2, 2025.

²⁴ "Cannabis Facts and Stats," CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

²⁵ "What Percentage of Americans Smoke Marijuana?," Gallup, Nov. 1, 2024.

²⁶ Cannabis is less toxic, less addictive, and less harmful to the body than alcohol. The CDC reports the chronic health impacts of alcohol cause 117,000 deaths per year while cannabis hasn't been shown to increase mortality rates. "Facts About U.S. Deaths from Excessive Alcohol Use," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Accessed January 2, 2025; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. *The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: Current state of evidence and recommendations for research*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, Conclusion 4-1, p. 221 ("Although the available evidence suggests that cannabis use is not associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality, the limited nature of that evidence makes it impossible to have confidence in these findings." "There is insufficient evidence to support or refute a statistical association between self-reported cannabis use and all-cause mortality.")

While states have revised some laws to try to keep up with best practices, no cannabis legalization law has been repealed. That's because they enjoy strong popular support, which increases post-legalization.²⁷

Mahalo for your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen O'Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen O'Keefe
Director of State Policies
202-905-2012
kokeefe@mpp.org

²⁷ As of July 2022 (the last time we checked when the data was publicly posted), a Civiqs polling data showed significant increases in support since states' voters passed legalization in those states that had implemented the law— up to 20-point increases in some cases.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:50:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason Hanley	Care Waialua	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Oppose seed to sale tracking and mandatory testing



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025**

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 2:00 PM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB1246 – RELATING TO CANNABIS

Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kusch, and Members of the Committees:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties. Additionally, UPW also represents approximately 1,500 members in the private sector.

UPW **opposes** HB1246, which, amongst other things, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis beginning on 1/1/2026.

Existing collective bargaining agreements (“CBA”) for Bargaining Units 1 and 10 allow employers to randomly, or with “reasonable suspicion”, test members for the use of “controlled substances”. Pursuant to the CBA, a controlled substance is defined as any substance under the Controlled Substance Act (21 United States Code 802), which includes cannabis.

Currently, there are a great number of positions that are prohibited from cannabis use, whether medical or nonmedical, due to professional requirements (e.g., commercial drivers, healthcare workers, heavy equipment operators, etc.). Members who are in positions that do not have such restrictions are allowed to use cannabis for medical purposes only if it is prescribed by their physician. For members who do not have a valid medical cannabis registration card, there is a firm understanding that cannabis use is strictly prohibited because it remains a criminal offense.

Legalizing adult nonmedical cannabis use may prove problematic for members who do not understand that as a controlled substance, as defined by U.S. code and their CBA, cannabis use, if detected by an employer, will result in disciplinary action despite a statutory change at the State level.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on this measure

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Where LGBTQIA+ Rights Meet the Labor Movement
A constituency group of the Hawai'i State AFL-CIO

February 3, 2025

House's Committees on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs, and Agriculture & Food Systems
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 2:00 PM

RE: **STRONG SUPPORT for House Bill 1246**

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, and fellow committee members,

Pride at Work – Hawai'i is an official chapter of [Pride at Work](#) which is a national nonprofit organization that represents LGBTQIA+ union members and their allies. We are an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO that organizes mutual support between the organized Labor Movement and the LGBTQIA+ Community to further social and economic justice.

Pride at Work - Hawai'i strongly supports House Bill 1246, which establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis beginning January 1, 2026, and institutes a fair and responsible taxation framework. This bill is a necessary step toward justice, economic growth, and community well-being.

For too long, cannabis prohibition has disproportionately harmed marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, Native Hawaiians, and people of color. Criminalizing personal cannabis use has led to unnecessary arrests and legal repercussions that disrupt lives, employment opportunities, and families. HB 1246 provides a long-overdue remedy by decriminalizing certain marijuana-related offenses and ensuring a more just approach to cannabis regulation.

The economic benefits of legalizing cannabis are undeniable. Establishing a regulated cannabis industry will generate tax revenue that can be reinvested into vital community services, including education, healthcare, and substance use treatment programs. Additionally, the creation of the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office in DCCA will provide stability and oversight, ensuring a responsible and transparent framework for both medical and adult-use cannabis markets.

Furthermore, this legislation prioritizes public safety by introducing new traffic laws that address cannabis consumption and impairment, safeguarding both residents and visitors. With a well-structured regulatory framework, HB 1246 promotes responsible use while mitigating potential risks associated with legalization.

As an organization committed to advancing the rights and economic well-being of LGBTQIA+ workers and allies, Pride at Work - Hawai'i believes that legalizing and regulating cannabis aligns with principles of social equity and economic justice. We urge this committee to pass HB 1246 to promote fairness, generate economic opportunities, and end the harmful consequences of prohibition.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

In solidarity,

Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)
President
[Pride at Work – Hawai'i](#)

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:57:35 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Martinez-Golojuch, MSW	Rainbow Family 808	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chairperson Tarnas, Chairperson Kahaloa, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Carolyn Martinez-Golojuch. I am a medical cannabis patient, a mother, and a dedicated advocate for compassionate and sensible cannabis policy reform. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1246, which will create the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office, legalize personal adult use of cannabis, and ensure comprehensive regulation and taxation of the industry.

As a medical cannabis patient, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of this natural medicine in managing health conditions that conventional pharmaceuticals have failed to address adequately. Cannabis has provided me with significant relief, improved my quality of life, and allowed me to remain an active and engaged member of my community and family. However, the current regulatory framework often places undue burdens on medical patients, limiting access and affordability. The establishment of the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office will streamline oversight and ensure a more patient-friendly system while maintaining robust consumer protections.

House Bill 1246 is a vital step toward social equity and economic justice. The legalization and regulation of adult-use cannabis will generate much-needed tax revenue for the state, create economic opportunities, and eliminate the criminalization of individuals for cannabis-related offenses. Decriminalizing these offenses is particularly crucial in addressing the disproportionate impact of cannabis prohibition on marginalized communities. The bill’s provisions for traffic safety and regulation ensure that legalization is implemented responsibly, prioritizing public health and safety.

Furthermore, transferring cannabis-related assets and personnel from the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture to the new Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office will provide centralized, effective governance over the entire cannabis industry. This will reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, foster innovation, and enable Hawai‘i to develop a sustainable and well-regulated cannabis market.

As a mother, I recognize the importance of proper regulation and education surrounding cannabis use. Legalization will allow for better control over distribution, keeping cannabis out of the hands of minors while ensuring that adults have access to safe, tested products. Prohibition has failed, and it is time for Hawai‘i to join the growing number of states that have embraced

sensible cannabis policies.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to pass House Bill 1246. This legislation represents a forward-thinking, economically beneficial, and socially responsible approach to cannabis regulation in Hawai'i. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Martinez-Golojuch, MSW
President and Founder
Rainbow Family 808



Kauai Hemp Company
4445-C Omao Rd, Koloa HI 96756
kauaihempco.com
(808) 720-6130

Testimony in Opposition to HB1246 as Written

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Judiah McRoberts**, and I am the **President of Kauai Hemp Company**, Hawai'i's largest certified organic hemp farm and CBD producer. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on **HB1246** and respectfully urge amendments to address serious concerns regarding the proposed regulations on hemp and cannabis.

Hemp and CBD Industry Concerns

The proposed **30mg THC limit per tincture** is far more restrictive than the **federal Farm Bill's 0.3% THC standard**, effectively eliminating most full-spectrum tinctures and severely damaging local businesses. This regulation would **cripple Hawai'i's hemp industry**, making it impossible for businesses like mine to compete and survive. I strongly urge the committee to align with the **Farm Bill's 0.3% THC standard** to maintain product integrity and industry viability.

Additionally, **hemp grant funding** should explicitly include support for **equipment, infrastructure, and other critical needs** identified by the **Hemp Task Force**. This funding is essential for farmers and processors to scale operations, create jobs, and strengthen Hawai'i's agricultural economy.

Adult-Use Cannabis Concerns

On the adult-use cannabis side, HB1246 must include **strong safeguards against conflicts of interest**. No board or selection committee members should have **any direct or indirect financial interest** in cannabis licenses. Without this protection, the licensing process risks being compromised by insider influence.

Furthermore, allowing **existing dispensaries a six-month head start** undermines social equity by **favoring already established operators**. New entrants, particularly small businesses and social equity applicants, deserve a fair opportunity to compete.

The **proposed lottery system** for license selection is also problematic. While inclusivity is important, the significant capital and expertise required to **safely and effectively** operate a cannabis business must be taken into account. A **merit-based system**—which awards points for **social equity, business viability, and community impact**—would ensure licenses are granted to those best prepared to succeed.



Kauai Hemp Company
4445-C Omao Rd, Koloa HI 96756
kauaihempco.com
(808) 720-6130

Request for Amendments

I urge the committee to amend **HB1246** to:

1. **Align the hemp tincture THC standard with the federal Farm Bill (0.3%)** to protect Hawai'i's hemp industry.
2. **Ensure hemp grant funding supports equipment, infrastructure, and other essential needs** identified by the Hemp Task Force.
3. **Prohibit board and selection committee members from having any financial interest in cannabis licenses** to prevent conflicts of interest.
4. **Remove the six-month dispensary head start** to promote fairness and social equity.
5. **Adopt a merit-based system for cannabis licensing** to prioritize well-prepared applicants.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership on this important issue and welcome any further discussion.

Mahalo,
Judiah McRoberts
President, Kauai Hemp Company



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS

HOUSE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS & AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS February 4, 2025

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, Chair Kahaloa and Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the joint Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs & Agriculture & Food Systems Committees:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** HB1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS. In 2016, delegates to the Democratic Party of Hawai'i's state convention passed a resolution (EDU 2016-05) supporting the legalization of adult-use recreational cannabis to generate revenue for public services, such as education.

It is high time that Hawai'i takes a necessary and progressive step toward responsible cannabis regulation, economic growth, and social justice reform in Hawai'i.

The creation of the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office will ensure a centralized and well-structured regulatory framework, providing clear oversight on cultivation, sales, taxation, and consumer safety. By consolidating responsibilities from the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, this bill streamlines governance, reducing redundancy and improving efficiency.

Legalizing adult-use cannabis will generate significant tax revenue for the state, fostering economic opportunities for local businesses and farmers. Other states that have implemented similar measures, such as Colorado and California, have witnessed substantial financial benefits that contribute to education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects. Hawai'i can similarly benefit from a robust cannabis industry with appropriate regulations in place.

The decriminalization provisions of this bill are particularly important for addressing the disproportionate impact of cannabis-related arrests on marginalized communities. Criminalizing cannabis possession has historically burdened the judicial system and unjustly penalized individuals for nonviolent offenses. By decriminalizing certain marijuana-related drug offenses, this bill promotes a fairer and more equitable legal system while allowing law enforcement to focus on more pressing public safety concerns.

The bill also takes critical steps to ensure public safety, including new traffic offenses relating to cannabis consumption and possession. Establishing clear guidelines on responsible use, similar to alcohol regulations, will help mitigate risks associated with impaired driving and underage consumption.

We must pass cannabis policies that are responsible, just, and equitable for our island home. This bill presents a balanced and forward-thinking approach to cannabis regulation in Hawai'i. It aligns with nationwide trends, prioritizes consumer safety, enhances economic development, and promotes social justice. We urge the committee to pass this bill and move Hawai'i toward a more equitable, responsible, and prosperous future.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org.

To: Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice-Chair
Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice-Chair
Members of the Agriculture & Food Systems

Fr: TY Cheng on behalf of HICIA Association.

Re: Testimony **In Support** on **House Bill (HB) 1246**

RELATING TO CANNABIS

Establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. Appropriates funds..

Dear Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Poepoe, Vice-Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Cannabis Industry Association, represents a majority of the state's licensed medical cannabis dispensaries. HICIA **supports** HB1246 as it would establish a strong regulatory model for the sale of cannabis to discourage current illegal market activity and safeguard the public while also generating substantial tax revenue for the State at a time when it is needed most.

In addition, the measure would consolidate various entities within Hawaii's cannabis industry including our members, the medical cannabis dispensary licensees, under a single regulatory umbrella to control cannabis and hemp. Under this regulatory model, greater efficiencies in government oversight can be achieved and redundancy can be avoided. Only through regulation and education, can the State address the growing health crisis of illicit and intoxicating hemp products sold in local stores without lab testing, proper packaging, and age gating.

KEY FACTS ABOUT HB1246

1) Substantial Tax Revenue Potential

HICIA has conducted a fiscal analysis of the measure and Hawaii's potential dual use cannabis market under this bill.

We expect during the **first year of sales**, this measure would generate approximately **\$39.2 million in new tax revenue** to the State through Income Taxes, Corporate Taxes, GET and the new 10% Cannabis Retail Tax.

Upon full market maturity when additional new retail, cultivation and production licenses are issued, we expect **\$109.7 million annually in new State tax revenue** would be generated (10% Cannabis Tax + GET + Corporate/Income Tax).

2) Avoids Up-Front Appropriations (Transfer of Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation)

HB1246 transfers staff, resources, and funding of the OMCCR to the new cannabis Office. This approach enables cannabis sales to begin utilizing existing State resources and avoids the need for up-front appropriations. Additional programs such as social equity and new law enforcement resources can then be funded through the expected \$39.2 million of new State tax revenue within the first year.

Breakdown of existing OMCCR resources and funding:

- a. 18 full-time employees
- b. \$2.5M annual operating budget appropriation
- c. \$2M in annual revenue from licensing fees and patient registration fees (special funds)
- d. \$2.8M in annual GET revenue from medical cannabis sales
- e. \$11.6M current cash balance

In addition, new licensing fees that are required prior to dual-use cannabis sales can generate additional funds to support program implementation. Conversion fees from the 8 Medical Cannabis Dispensaries alone would result in up to \$2.5M in revenue. Together with OMCCR resources, the state could easily launch a dual-use cannabis program utilizing \$10-11M in existing resources.

CONCLUSION

HB1246 is one of the few measures proposed this session with the potential to generate new revenue for the state without imposing additional tax burdens on residents and existing businesses. In addition, the measure would finally establish regulatory oversight and greater public safety for the sale and use of cannabis and hemp.

We strongly urge the committees to pass this measure to effectively regulate the cannabis industry, enforce against the illegal market, safeguard the public, and generate much needed new tax revenue.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony
Committees on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture & Food Systems
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 2:00 pm
HB1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS

To: Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Members of the Committees

From: Jaclyn Moore, Pharm.D., CEO Big Island Grown Dispensaries

Re: In STRONG SUPPORT of HB1246, RELATING TO CANNABIS

Aloha Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, and Members of the Committees:

Big Island Grown Dispensaries is one of eight medical cannabis dispensary licensees in the State. We operate production facilities and 3 retail locations on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1246**. This important measure would establish a regulatory framework for the legalization of adult cannabis sales in the islands.

This measured and balanced proposal would provide oversight of a cannabis market that is currently uncontrolled and dominated by unregulated sources. Public health and safety are currently at risk. As a licensed medical dispensary, we have seen the first-hand effects of the unregulated illicit market has on our industry. Over the past three and a half years, the number of registered cannabis patients has declined by roughly 15%. Based on our experience, that doesn't mean there are fewer patients with chronic pain or other debilitating conditions, it simply indicates that patients now choose to secure their medicine from unregulated, untested, and illicit sources.

In addition, it is important to note that a regulated cannabis sales program would also help to address the unforeseen effects of State law that decriminalizes cannabis possession but does not provide a lawful way to purchase cannabis.

Simply put, regulating and taxing adult cannabis use improves public health and safety.

The Hawaii Cannabis Industry Association (HICIA) has released public opinion poll results that regularly show roughly 86% of Hawaii residents support legalizing cannabis. Even with this popularity, however, most residents are clear that regulations must be established to ensure both users and the public are safeguarded and that the State fiscally benefits from legalization.

For the reasons above, we respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB1246.

Lau Ola LLC, dba Big Island Grown Dispensaries
HILO WAIMEA KONA



Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Jaclyn L. Moore, Pharm.D.
CEO Big Island Grown Dispensaries

Lau Ola LLC, dba Big Island Grown Dispensaries
HILO WAIMEA KONA

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:44:49 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Quintin Wilcox	LabGrown Genetics	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe that cannabis is a plant that can help many people manage various health conditions. One major problem that we have is not being able to properly test cannabis for all the medical attributes due to federal and state laws. In order to understand the entire chemical compound and make up of the cannabis cannabinoids we need to be able to do testing on specific cannabinoids. Allowing cannabis to people over 21+ will allow people to do more research. I am the owner of a Medical cannabis Caregiver license and I will first handly say this plant should be free to the world. Due to local state laws at this time we can not. Hawaii needs to be a staple to the rest of the states on how we should regulate medicinal cannabis and recreational cannabis. Hawaii cannabis law is outlined as a medical but the access for patients is limited to dispensaries with low quality products that often test for molds or mildew. Allowing people 21+ to consume cannabis will allow cultivation from other sites / stores allowing the patient to pick the better products vs. being stuck with only dispensaries to choose from. Allowing cannabis for people to access will not only help the community with medical conditions but will allow the community to grow from taxation on cannabis related sales. These laws we have in place now are not it and do not provide adequate products to the market or various options to the patients to be able to freely choose there own cannabis or consumption method. I am in support of HB1246

To: Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice-Chair
Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice-Chair
Members of the Agriculture & Food Systems

Fr: A. Casey Rothstein, CEO Green Aloha - Kauai Medical Dispensary License

Re: Testimony In **Support** on **House Bill (HB) 1246**

RELATING TO CANNABIS

Establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. Appropriates funds..

Dear Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Poepoe, Vice-Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Green Aloha **supports** HB1246 as it would establish a strong regulatory model for the sale of cannabis to discourage current illegal market activity and safeguard the public while also generating substantial tax revenue for the State at a time when it is needed most.

This bill would consolidate various entities within Hawaii's cannabis industry under a single regulatory umbrella to control cannabis and hemp. Under this regulatory model, greater efficiencies in government oversight can be achieved and redundancy can be avoided. Only through regulation and education, can the State address the growing health crisis of illicit and intoxicating hemp products sold in local stores without lab testing, proper packaging, and age gating. There are currently over 70 storefronts statewide selling Recreational Cannabis in the guise of Farm Bill Hemp. These products are unregulated and in many cases untested. This bill will bring this industry under a single authority that would have the power to put strong regulations on this industry as a whole, all while adding tax dollars to the state funds.

There is and has been a flourishing Recreational Cannabis Market in Hawaii for many years; decades even. Hawaii cannabis is famous all over the world for being grown in

the perfect growing environment and legendary sunshine that Hawaii offers. Both residents and tourists alike have been enjoying Hawaii Cannabis as responsible adults for decades. However, everyone of them has had to turn to the illicit, black or gray markets to do so and every dollar that has changed hands has done so tax free and with no regulations to ensure the safety of consumers. Polling has shown that well over 50 percent of Hawaii voters support the legalization of cannabis for responsible adult use. It is time for the State Legislature to do the responsible thing, as 24 other states have done, and create a legal, well regulated and taxed Adult Use Cannabis Industry. HB1246 is a balanced and careful approach to creating a well regulated and reasonably taxed industry that will allow the responsible Adult Use Cannabis users of Hawaii to obtain their cannabis of choice via a legal, safe and tested dispensary system, while providing the state of Hawaii with a previously unclaimed tax stream.

Adult Use Cannabis is already here, it is the job of the Legislature to regulate the industry. By not passing an Adult Use Cannabis bill the Legislature is not preventing Adult Use Sales from happening, instead the Legislature is simply handing the industry to the unregulated illicit market.

HB1246 is one of the few measures proposed this session with the potential to generate new revenue for the state without imposing additional tax burdens on residents and existing businesses. In addition, the measure would finally establish regulatory oversight and greater public safety for the sale and use of cannabis and hemp.

We strongly urge the committees to pass this measure to effectively regulate the cannabis industry, enforce against the illegal market, safeguard the public, and generate much needed new tax revenue.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A. Casey Rothstein
CEO, Green Aloha Dispensary - Kauai



February 2, 2025

Subject: HB 1246 Testimony

No law shall limit how much food and medicine you can legally grow for your own family and community.

Unlicensed Vs. Licensed Farms

Cannabis cultivation, along with organic food cultivation, is our natural human right and civil liberty. Just ask Carrie Ann Shirota at the Hawaii American Civil Liberties Union if you are still confused about the ethics of government regulation, interference, and encumbrance with community self-sufficiency and regenerative organic agricultural practice and production.

Therefore, it is every individual's CIVIL RIGHT to cultivate cannabis for one's self, family and friends. Cannabis cultivation is a right to medical and agricultural self determination and a financially-sustainable traditional system of community-driven healthcare that balances both community-grown economic and medical support from within.

Any individual who is farming and cultivating cannabis NOT for retail or wholesale sales should NOT be required to obtain and maintain a license or pay taxes on cannabis cultivation. Cannabis cultivation on private property, shared between family and friends is none of the government's business and the State of Hawaii has no right to institute mandatory licensing and taxes on those individuals.

Licenses and taxes regulated by the State of Hawaii should be required ONLY for individuals, and businesses, who sell products containing THC/THCA directly to the public (adults 21+ years), dispensaries, or wholesale to a retail distributor. Primarily for the benefit of consumer protection and mitigating for potential legal liabilities, anyone selling THC/THCA products to a "stranger", "tourist", "business", "retailer", or "wholesaler" shall be required to properly test and label their product in accordance with the regulatory standards set forth by the law. Their health and safety compliance shall be regulated via mandatory licensing and taxes registered with the State of Hawaii.

Similar to the County's enforcement of illegal "Transient Vacation Rentals" (ie. illegally operating AirBnBs, VRBOs, etc.), the trigger for the State of Hawaii to identify and regulate (ie. levy fines and/or convict) unlicensed commercial cannabis cultivation and sales shall be verified by



evidence of public marketing and advertising of cannabis products containing THC/THCA. Any individual, farm, or business actively branding and advertising (ie. social media, website, signs, flyers, radio or television ads) shall be required to register and comply with all licensing and taxes under the law.

Therefore, any individual, family, or property cultivating cannabis WITHOUT branding and advertising and public sales shall NOT be subject to the State of Hawaii's requirements for licensing and taxation.

Agricultural Vs. Residential Zoning

The canopy or plant count limitations per grow site need to be cognizant of and consistent with zoning and land use. Agricultural zoned areas shall NOT be subject to the same requirements and limitations placed on cultivation in non-agricultural (ie. residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) zoned areas. Cannabis cultivation IS farming, and cannabis cultivation IS agriculture. Therefore, the law shall protect and encourage the ability to cultivate greater amounts (plant count or canopy area) of cannabis crop on agricultural and rural zoned properties, even to the extent of prioritizing the establishment and proliferation of both licensed and unlicensed (non-commercial) farms on agricultural zoned lands.

Cannabis and Hemp for Soil Remediation

Cannabis/Hemp cultivation for the purpose of soil remediation (ie. PFAS, heavy metals, chemical toxins, machinery oil and fluids, etc.), which shall NOT yield a consumable crop or product, shall NOT be subject to plant count or canopy area limitations.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of agricultural zoned acres previously used by ignorant and irresponsible plantation companies have been intentionally polluted with toxic chemical waste, plantation rubbish, and abandoned equipment and materials. Waiawa (AKA "Poison Valley") in Kekaha and Kanuikapono PCS in Anahola are prime examples of degraded soils that have been contaminated by plantation dumping of waste and refuse over many years and even many generations. Hemp has already been scientifically proven to remove toxins from the soil, however because the plant cannot metabolize these toxic chemicals, the plants must be either burned or removed offsite and dumped at the landfill. The contaminated plants cannot be used in any way for consumable products, and must serve the sole purpose of soil remediation and toxin removal. Therefore, no limits shall be placed on cannabis/hemp cultivation for soil remediation. "Before" and "After" soil testing for these toxins, heavy metals, chemicals and



PFAS, shall be required for properties implementing large scale soil remediation hemp plantings.

Social Equity and Fair Compensation for Farm Laborers

It is very apparent that these bills are written by individuals who have ZERO experience farming, let alone ZERO personal experience using the cannabis plant for its intended medicinal and spiritual purposes. That lack of experience is evident in the lack of foresight regarding who will be doing the actual cannabis farming. The lack of experience of the authors who wrote these cannabis bills is also evident in their glaring ignorance regarding the immense difficulty to be a career farmer in Hawaii dealing with the numerous detrimental factors and uncertainties that make farming so financially costly and psychologically draining that the average person is physically and mentally INCAPABLE of successfully (profitably) farming in the long run, year after year. Most beginning farmers in Hawaii (namely GoFarm graduates) fail to continue farming consistently past the 3 year mark, and even fewer can claim to still be farming seriously after 5 years.

Therefore, it is incredibly naive and glib for the champions of these shortsighted cannabis legalization bills to simply state with such a blind certainty that this “budding industry” will produce many valuable jobs for local people to afford to continue living here in Hawaii.

Historically, farm workers were routinely exploited for cheap labor. Plantation workers were fundamentally one step above indentured servitude and slavery. Historically, immigrant populations are routinely imported and exploited for cheap labor because they are vulnerable communities with limited socioeconomic opportunities and alternatives. Historically, this was the ONLY way for the plantation corporations to remain profitable.

Unless the State of Hawaii is going to ensure tourism-subsidized HEALTHCARE and HOUSING for Hawaii’s farmers, there will be NO SOCIAL EQUITY and NO FARMERS to grow Hawaii’s agricultural industries.

The result will be an increase of imported immigrant farm laborers and the continued downfall of Hawaiian agriculture concurrent with the continued expansion of urbanization and speculative haole development of prime agricultural lands across Hawaii: an UNSustainable political agenda that continues to desecrate the fertile lands that should be feeding and providing for ALL of Hawaii’s people.



I have also included in my testimony a letter to Sharon Hurd, Chairperson of HDOA, expressing my concerns with the shortsighted agenda being pushed by Hawaii's State and County agencies. An agenda that willfully fails to acknowledge the fact that Hawaii is systematically pigeonholing many valiant wannabe farmers in poverty. There are currently NO INCENTIVES for young able-bodied persons to take on the massive financial risk of leaving their safe 9-to-5 jobs with healthcare benefits, to make \$5/lbs growing vegetables. You try paying your rent for your farm lease AND your rent for your residence with your hard earned \$5/lbs, month after month, year after year. You try paying your employees' "living wages" with \$5/lbs. See how far that will get everyone.

NO FARMERS = NO FARMS = NO FOOD or MEDICINE

This bill needs to support the FARMERS above all else, otherwise this is nothing but a social equity FAILURE, a land management FAILURE, and an industry FAILURE directly reflective of your political leadership FAILURE.

DO THE RIGHT THING.

"Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono."

Mahalo nui loa,

Alex Wong
Kauai Farm Planning



June 26, 2024

RE: Making Farming Profitable in Hawaii By Offsetting Negative Externalities Caused By Hawaii Tourism AND Subsidizing Farmer Housing and Healthcare

Aloha Ms. Hurd,

Thank you for taking the time earlier this month to assemble a team of scribes and analysts to come gather input from Kauai's farmers on June 3, 2024.

Thank you for acknowledging that farming, especially in Hawaii, is very difficult and that there are honestly ZERO monetary and financial INCENTIVES for young local residents to begin farming or continue farming outside of personal moral obligation, passion, and kuleana. As you stated in your presentation, farming is not profitable and unless we can figure out how to make it profitable in Hawaii, our population of active farmers will continue to decrease.

Thank you for acknowledging that farming can be incredibly mentally and physically discouraging due to the many uncontrollable factors that farmers face every time they grow a crop and try to sell the resulting product. Pests, Invasive Species, Viruses & Diseases, Insane Prices for Capital and Inputs, Shipping Costs, Transportation Costs, Weather, Drought, Storms & Floods, Lack of Water Access, Lack of Decent Affordable AG/Homestead Housing, Lack of Skilled Labor, Covering Labor Costs (Fair Livable Wages), Theft, Farm Rent, Home Rent/Mortgage, Family Illness & Injury, Healthcare (and lack thereof), Mainland and International Competition, Corporate Competition, Lease Eviction, Aging & Failing Infrastructure, Poor Soil and Water Conditions due to Past & Present Mistakes and Blatant Negligence and Corner-Cutting, are just some of the many uncontrollable factors in Hawaii that came up in the recent discussions among Kauai's farmers.

Thank you for acknowledging that farming in Hawaii is EXTRA EXPENSIVE, especially due to additional shipping Costs for capital and inputs. And that Housing Costs are NOT affordable for most locals, and even LESS affordable for farmers who have a difficult time being Profitable in a very financially precarious and unpredictable field with many uncontrollable factors.



Thank you for acknowledging that farming in Hawaii needs to be PROFITABLE in order for locals and young people to even want to try doing it. We all know that $\text{PROFIT} = \text{REVENUE} - \text{COSTS}$. The State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture cannot guarantee that it can effectively INCREASE REVENUE for Hawaii's farmers across the board. That would simply be a false and disingenuous promise. A promise that neither the State or the Counties can bet their last remaining integrity and trust on. Here's the thing: Farmers already know all of this.

If HDOA and Ulu Pono Initiative really want to make farming in Hawaii realistically profitable, you need to LOWER COSTS for Hawaii's farmers in order to INCREASE PROFIT MARGINS. That is something you can consistently provide for and guarantee.

Here are some realistic and implementable solutions for Lowering Costs:

To minimize Transportation Costs, farmers need to be able to LIVE ON THEIR FARMLAND. Therefore HDOA and Ulu Pono need to work with the State Office of Planning & Sustainable Development, DBEDT, USDA Rural Development and FSA, SLUC, County Planning and Public Works Departments to change Zoning and Building Codes to allow for more permanent AND temporary AG housing to be built and inhabited on AG Land. Fast-Track and allow for bureaucratic exemptions when a reasonable Farm Plan and APPROVED Soil Water Conservation Plan is attached to the permit application.

To minimize Housing Costs for farmers, HDOA needs to work with the State of Hawaii Department of Taxation, Hawaii Public Housing Authority, County Housing Agencies, County Real Property Tax Assessment Agencies, and Local Non-Profit Organizations to provide Housing Subsidies/Vouchers/Tax Deductions/Tax Credits to Hawaii's Farmers to LOWER housing costs (i.e. Rent and Mortgage) AND create another INCENTIVE to get more young locals into farming in Hawaii. It is absolutely unreasonable to expect new farmers and small family farms to pay for their Farm Rent/Mortgage, Housing Rent/Mortgage, Property Taxes, Income Taxes, Utilities, Bills, Transportation/Vehicle Costs, Equipment & Tools, Farm Inputs, Labor Wages, and regular family/household expenses while earning an income of \$4-10/lbs. It is both ridiculous and cruel, that we live in a society that systematically devalues the Time, Knowledge, Skill, and Energy of the Farmer to grow quality food and products, while consumers simultaneously continue to expect a cheap, affordable price for their food and nourishment they need to



buy to survive. Historically, housing was provided/subsidized by the Landlord or Plantation in the feudal system. They no longer cover the housing cost, so WHO will? Unless the State mandates that the remaining large AG Land owners (i.e. remaining Plantation Owners) in Hawaii be required to provide FREE or SUBSIDIZED housing for today's farmers, the only viable answer to that problem, as of now, is the State of Hawaii and the Counties.

Many farmers, especially new farmers attempting to farm full time, do not have medical insurance. Unless their spouse has a job where the employer provides healthcare coverage, farming families go uninsured. This is financially dangerous, especially in a field prone to accident and injury. It should also be noted that the University of Hawaii CTAHR Seeds Of Wellbeing Project has conducted and published a study on the very harmful effects of poor mental health among Hawaii's farmers and ALL farmers across the Continental United States. Farmers cannot and will not access quality Professional Mental Health aid when it is an additional COST that they cannot afford out of pocket. FARMERS NEED SUBSIDIZED HEALTHCARE. The State of Hawaii already has a decent MedQuest Program. The problem is that if you want farmers to be Profitable, then they will not qualify for the \$2000/month income cap that makes them eligible for MedQuest. Currently, if farmers want to be insured by MedQuest they must remain poor. The solution is to work with the State of Hawaii Department of Health & Human Services and Med-QUEST Division to create an exemption for active farmers to qualify for MedQuest. This solution will LOWER healthcare costs for Hawaii's farmers (and their families) AND INCENTIVIZE more locals of ALL AGES to start farming seriously, and commercially for PROFIT.

We all know that the Politician and Bureaucrat's favorite cop-out and naysayer rebuttal is:

"WHO is going to PAY for it?"

Clearly, we cannot expect local residents/taxpayers to take on that additional financial burden when they too are having a difficult time affording to keep their family in Hawaii due to the rising Cost of Living, and the incredible competition over Housing in Hawaii's INTERNATIONAL real estate market. So the next logical solution is to TRANSFER that COST to Hawaii's TOURISM INDUSTRY. Tourism in Hawaii creates many NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES (ie. pollution, wear and tear, occupation), to the ecosystem, the marine and terrestrial environment, to our roads, our water ways, and our infrastructure,



to our natural resources, our fire and police and search and rescue resources, and to our quality of life: the traffic, the Transient Vacation Rentals (ie. Airbnbs) that eat up our residential housing supply, and the consumption of our food, our gas and fuel, our water, and our electricity. The Tourism Industry is BOOMING and has been raking in PROFITS in the wake of the Pandemic. There needs to be a direct system of social equity that offsets the COSTS of Hawaii's Farmers (making them more PROFITABLE) while reallocating the PROFITS of Hawaii's Tourism Industry to offset the NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES these tourists cause.

Hawaii's Tourists and Mainland-based Tourism-related Corporations need to be directly subsidizing the effort to lower COSTS for Hawaii's Farmers. There is no other viable solution. The individuals supporting the "Hawaii Visitor Green Fee" have the correct idea to charge every Tourist who comes to Hawaii, a mandatory Environmental and Community Impact Fee. These tourists do not pay State taxes, they do not contribute to the maintenance of Hawaii's resources and infrastructure. A nominal Visitor Impact Fee is the least they can do to contribute to the Island they are visiting and the people that graciously host and accommodate them.

The Visitor Impact Fee is not a new policy implementation by any means. Palau has a mandatory US\$100 Visitor Fee which airlines are required to include in the price of a ticket to Palau. And the Galapagos Islands will be RAISING their mandatory Visitor Fee August 2024 from US\$100 to US\$200.

HDOA should be advocating for Hawaii's Farmers by advocating for the legislative changes and the inter-agency implementation of this Visitor Impact Fee to support the financial bottom line for Hawaii's Farmers, and give them a real opportunity to be PROFITABLE, since that is your purpose and mission to bring back Hawaii Agriculture from the brink of economic death. HDOA needs to work with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, DBEDT, County Economic Development Agencies, to push this solution through the legislature and through the State and County bureaucracies.

This is an ETHICAL and MORAL issue pertaining to SOCIAL EQUITY.

Which option is more socially equitable and will result in a direct improvement of the status quo?

A) Expect Hawaii's Farmers to continue to subsidize the costs of their farming operations by working a second or third job to pay for everything required to farm, or



B) Require a multibillion dollar Tourism Industry to offset the social and environmental damage they incur by having them subsidize Hawaii's Farmers.

We, the Farmers who participated in the June 3rd HDOA meeting at Koloa Neighborhood Center, were disappointed that you left immediately after your monologue and were unable to participate in our group discussions and listen to our concerns and solutions that you were asking for.

We look forward to hearing from you and your office regarding all progress being made in this effort to make Farming PROFITABLE in Hawaii by lowering the COST of HOUSING and HEALTHCARE for Hawaii's Farmers.

Unless there are better solutions out there, this is the plan that needs to be implemented at the State and County levels. Please email me if you have any further questions.

NOTHING CHANGES IF NOTHING CHANGES.

Mahalo nui loa,

Alex Wong
Kauai Farm Planning

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:55:22 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Derek Tengan	5 Minute Pharmacy	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to oppose HB 1246 – Relating to Cannabis.

I am the owner of an independent pharmacy that serves a large population of behavioral health patients. Many of these patients are homeless or live in a shelter. We deliver to these patients in the community daily. Every day, we witness the devastating effects of substance use disorders, including those that begin with marijuana use. Many of our patients started with cannabis and eventually progressed to more harmful substances, worsening their mental health conditions and increasing their need for medical intervention.

Legalizing marijuana will further normalize its use, making it more accessible and increasing the risk of addiction, especially among vulnerable populations. As a healthcare provider on the front lines, I strongly oppose this bill. Instead of expanding access to another mind-altering substance, we should be focusing on prevention, education, and treatment for those already struggling with addiction.

I urge you to oppose HB1246 in the interest of public health and safety. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Thanks,

Derek Tengan

5 Minute Pharmacy

Owner

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:09:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tyler Crook	Hilo Grow Shop, LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my **support** for HB1246.

Legacy growers, who have been cultivating cannabis long before its legalization, should be included in the new regulatory framework. These growers possess invaluable knowledge and experience that can contribute to the sustainability and diversity of Hawaii's cannabis industry. By supporting legacy growers, we honor their contributions and ensure that the industry remains rooted in local expertise.

Moreover, it is essential to create an inclusive application process that allows all sorts of folks to participate. I would urge to change up our approach to the current monopolized medical cannabis system. Maine's approach to licensing and regulation emphasizes fairness and accessibility, ensuring that small craft farms have the opportunity to thrive. By adopting similar measures, Hawaii can prevent monopolization and promote a diverse and vibrant cannabis market. I urge the legislature to consider this thoroughly.

By implementing HB1246 with a focus on anti-monopoly and pro-small craft farms, we can ensure that the cannabis industry reflects our values and benefits all residents. Let us learn from Maine's example and create a cannabis industry that is equitable, sustainable, and inclusive.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I urge you to support a fair and diverse cannabis industry in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Tyler Crook

Hilo Grow Shop, LLC



House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Rep. Matthias, Kusch, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 4, 2024

ACS CAN OPPOSES and Asks for Clarification of HB 1246: RELATING TO CANNABIS.

Cynthia Au, Government Relations Director – Hawaii Guam
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Thank you for the opportunity to **OPPOSES** and asks for clarity on HB 1246: RELATING TO CANNABIS. American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. We support fact-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem for everyone.

ACS CAN remains concerned about reducing exposure to secondhand smoke. Expanding the use of cannabis only heightens these concerns and we encourage the legislature to ensure cannabis laws do not undermine effective tobacco control laws and further health disparities.

ACS CAN requests clarification that smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, of any cannabis or cannabis derived products, whether natural or synthetic, is prohibited by chapter 328J. Referencing “in public” and “open to the public” could create unnecessary confusion. ACS CAN also requests that any authorization issued by a college or university to allow the use of medical cannabis on campus should not include cannabis or hemp intended for inhalation in all workplaces and public places. This includes prohibiting indoor smoking associated with permits for special events and social consumption.

Page 62 lines 12-15 references requirements for an annual report to include public health and safety data, but it only includes “accidental ingestion by minors and cannabis-driving accidents,” and data collected, receive or analyzed by the office. *We urge the state to collect baseline data on cannabis use and monitor the ongoing impact of legalized cannabis on the use of tobacco and other substances including alcohol, opioids and to track psychosis and other behavioral health conditions. We also urge the state to collect data on how engaging “disproportionately impacted area(s)” in the cannabis industry impacts health equity, including the impact of cannabis use, sales and all cannabis business locations in these areas as well as ensure equitable enforcement.*

Page 65 lines 17-19 references the makeup of the advisory board should at a minimum include one person with a professional background in public health, mental health, substance abuse or toxicology. Given the office is charged with the “protection of public health and safety” we should recommend more than one seat for public health on the advisory board – one with a professional background in public health, one with a professional background in mental health, one with a professional background in substance abuse and one with a professional background in toxicology.

Cannabis smoke, like tobacco smoke, is a lung irritant and can pose significant risks to people who use and to those near use.

ACS CAN opposes smoking or aerosolization of any form of cannabis. ACS CAN supports prohibiting smoking or aerosolizing of marijuana and other cannabinoids in public places because the cancer-causing substances found in marijuana smoke pose numerous health hazards to the individual using and others in their presence. Secondhand marijuana smoke can pass THC, with people exposed feeling a psychoactive effect.¹ This can be especially dangerous for children who are exposed. Allowing the smoking or aerosolizing of marijuana in public places also undermines the effectiveness of 100% smoke-free laws.

Thank you again for the opportunity to oppose and ask for clarity. ACS CAN would be available to speak with lawmakers on specific language in the bill. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Government Relations Director Cynthia Au at 808.460.6109, or Cynthia.Au@Cancer.org.

¹ CDC. Marijuana FAQs. Accessed February 11, 2022: <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/faqs.htm>



Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform In Support of HB 1246

February 3, 2025

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch, and honorable members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture and Food Systems Committees:

Chair Tarnas's HB 1246 is a thoughtful and comprehensive bill to legalize cannabis for adults 21 and older while putting public health, public and consumer education, and equity at the forefront. We are grateful that the bill would preserve and expand access to medical cannabis, while creating new opportunities for small, Hawai'i-based businesses, legacy growers, and social equity applicants.

Hawai'i's cannabis laws needlessly ensnare hundreds of people — disproportionately Native Hawaiian people — in its criminal justice system every year. Long after jail sentences are complete and fines are paid, cannabis arrest records derail lives, making it hard to get a job, education, and housing. Crucially, HB 1246 would also include state-initiated expungement to stop derailing lives for many prior cannabis records.

Like alcohol prohibition a century ago, cannabis prohibition has failed. It wastes taxpayer dollars, perpetuates racial disparities, puts consumers at risk, and locks people up for minor offenses in overcrowded jails and prisons. HB 1246 would grow the economy, increase freedom, and promote health and safety. It would also move sales above ground so consumers can buy a lab-tested, regulated product and workers don't face felonies.

We suggest three amendments, which we believe are keeping with the intent of the bill: adding language to explicitly prioritize the licensure of legacy growers in two places and to remove the reference to a "randomized lottery" in the preamble. Our recommended amendments are listed in the appendix.

We hope that you will make those revisions to HB 1246 and pass it out of your committees. Instead of driving cannabis underground, derailing lives, and pouring

tax dollars down the drain, it's time for Hawai'i to regulate cannabis and invest in youth, impacted communities, and public health.

Mahalo for your time and public service,

The Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform
info@legalizehawaii.org
LegalizeHawaii.org

Member Organizations:

ACLU of Hawai'i ♦ Cannabis Society of Hawai'i ♦ Council for Native Hawaiian
Advancement ♦ Doctors for Drug Policy Reform ♦ Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i ♦
Last Prisoner Project ♦ Marijuana Policy Project

Appendix

We urge your committees to adopt the following amendments:

P. 34, lines 9-10, delete, “, including by randomized lottery selection”

P. 48, line 2, after “by” insert “legacy growers and”

P. 154, line 19, after “chapter,” insert “, legacy growers,”

Pakaloha Care Clinic
Abir Amirdash, APRN
PO Box 354
Kaneohe, HI
808-292-6507
pakalohacare@gmail.com
www.pakalohacare.com



Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for your time, dedication, and commitment to shaping policies that will impact the future of Hawai‘i. As we stand at the crossroads of cannabis legislation, we have a rare and historic opportunity to set a precedent ahead of federal legalization—one that prioritizes patient rights, economic opportunities, and social justice.

Across the mainland, states that have legalized cannabis continue to grapple with what is often labeled as the “illicit market.” Here in Hawai‘i, however, our so-called "illicit market" is often composed of our own community members—our local aunties and uncles—who have been growing and using cannabis for generations. Rather than criminalizing these individuals, we must craft legislation that is inclusive, fair, and beneficial to the people of our state.

I strongly oppose this bill in its current form and urge the following amendments to ensure that legalization is equitable, economically viable, and aligned with public health and safety:

1. Implement Federal Exemption HCR 132

Hawai‘i must act now to protect patients, farmers, producers, and medical cannabis providers from federal overreach. The continued classification of cannabis as a Schedule I drug—despite extensive research proving its medicinal benefits—puts our residents at risk. Without state-level protections, anyone participating in Hawai‘i’s medical cannabis program is technically violating federal law. This contradiction creates barriers to safety regulations, financial services, and business development. Implementing HCR 132 is critical to securing Hawai‘i’s autonomy and protecting our local cannabis industry.

2. Eliminate THC Testing for Employment, Including for "Sensitive Positions"

Pre-employment THC testing is an outdated and inequitable practice. This is particularly concerning for police officers, first responders, and healthcare workers, who are exposed to high-stress and traumatic situations regularly. While opioid prescriptions are readily provided for pain management, cannabis remains unfairly stigmatized. Studies have demonstrated that cannabis is a safer alternative to opioids for managing stress, anxiety, and pain—yet workers face discrimination for using a non-addictive, plant-based medicine. Employment protections must reflect current medical understanding and the realities of the workforce.

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3. Remove Canopy Size Restrictions on Agricultural Land

Restricting canopy size on agricultural land stifles local farmers and businesses, limiting the potential of Hawai'i's cannabis industry. Without arbitrary limitations, Hawai'i can foster a robust agricultural sector that supports local cultivators, enhances job creation, and generates tax revenue. Additionally, larger cultivation operations would help meet patient demand and drive down the cost of medical cannabis, making it more accessible.

4. Expand the Caregiver Program

The current caregiver program is too restrictive and fails to serve patients adequately. I propose allowing a 1 caregiver to 5 patient ratio while maintaining residential grow restrictions. Many patients rely on caregivers to provide high-quality, affordable cannabis, and expanding this program will support those in need while still ensuring responsible cultivation practices.

5. Prevent HOAs from Restricting Medical Cannabis Cultivation

Patients who live in condominiums and other HOA-governed residences should not be denied their right to cultivate their own medicine. Landlords cannot prohibit tenants from growing state-legal medical cannabis, so why should an HOA be able to impose such a restriction? Medical cannabis patients deserve equal rights, regardless of where they live.

6. Allocate Funding to Open the State Lab for Product Testing

A state-run cannabis testing lab is essential for ensuring the safety and quality of products available in Hawai'i. Investing in a state lab would create jobs, establish standardized testing protocols, and improve consumer confidence.

7. Permit Direct Sales of Hemp Flower Within the State

Hemp farmers in Hawai'i face unnecessary barriers to selling their products. Allowing direct hemp flower sales would provide economic opportunities for local farmers while ensuring consumers have access to high-quality, locally grown hemp. This aligns with our state's commitment to supporting sustainable agriculture.

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8. Establish Standards for Cannabis Healthcare Providers

Currently, many healthcare providers issue cannabis recommendations without offering adequate education on proper use, dosing, and potential interactions with other medications. Patients often turn to dispensary staff—who may not have medical training—for guidance. Establishing mandatory educational requirements for providers certifying patients would ensure safe and responsible cannabis use while improving patient outcomes.

A Path Forward

Hawai‘i has the opportunity to create a cannabis policy that is fair, safe, and beneficial for patients, businesses, and the broader community. However, we must ensure that legalization does not disproportionately harm those who have long been part of Hawai‘i’s cannabis culture. These proposed amendments will help create an equitable framework that protects patients, fosters economic growth, and upholds the values of our state.

I urge you to take these concerns into account and implement the necessary changes to this bill. Mahalo for your time, consideration, and dedication to the well-being of Hawai‘i’s people.

Mahalo,
Abir Amirdash, APRN
Pakaloha Care Clinic

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amirdash", written over a horizontal line.

02/03/2025



Committees: Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture & Food Systems
Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 2:00pm
Place: Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i: In SUPPORT of HB1246 Relating to Cannabis**

Dear Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloe, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kusch and Committee Members:

ACLU of Hawai'i **supports HB1246 Relating to Cannabis**, which establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, the bill legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis and establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. It also adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. The bill makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, the bill decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate and transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health (DOH) and assets of the Department of Agriculture (DOA) relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. Lastly, the bill establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis and appropriates funds.

Adult-Use Cannabis Legalization Will Reverse Prohibition Policies that Violates an Individual's Right to Bodily Autonomy and Privacy.

The ACLU of Hawai'i supports adult-use cannabis legalization based on the rights of individuals to bodily autonomy and privacy enshrined in our federal and Hawai'i Constitutions. This includes the decision to use (or refuse) alcohol, tobacco, Tylenol or cannabis, a plant with known medicinal properties since time immemorial.¹

Second, individuals in Hawai'i have the explicit right to privacy.² Individuals should be able to exercise their right to bodily autonomy, and use or carry cannabis on their person, and within

¹ Similarly, the ACLU of Hawai'i supports the rights of individuals to access reproductive care as a right to bodily autonomy, including but not limited to the abortion pill.

² The Hawai'i Constitution reads as follows: "The right of the people to privacy is recognized and shall not be infringed without the showing of a compelling state interest. The legislature shall take affirmative steps to implement this right." Article I, section 6.

their houses and not be subject to unreasonable searches, seizures and invasions of privacy.³

Adult-Use Cannabis Legalization Must Include Social Equity and Reparative Justice Reforms to Address the Harms Resulting from Decades of Cannabis Prohibition.

The ACLU of Hawai'i strongly supports comprehensive equitable policies to legalize, tax, and regulate adult use of cannabis, in tandem with social equity and reparative reforms to redress the devastating effects of cannabis prohibition policies.

Notably, these harms have disparately impacted Native Hawaiians. As reflected in The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System Report conducted by the Office of Hawaiians Affairs and Justice Policy Institute, Native Hawaiians do not use drugs at drastically different rates from people of other races or ethnicities, but Native Hawaiians go to prison for drug offenses more often than people of other races or ethnicities.⁴

The Crime in Hawai'i 2020: A Review of Uniform Crime Reports compiled in 2020 by the Hawai'i Attorney General Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division Research and Statistics Branch provides arrest data relating to marijuana possession.

Adult Part II Arrests by Offense, State of Hawaii, Marijuana Possession

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
629	627	900	791	523

As highlighted by the Attorney General's data, individuals in Hawai'i continue to be arrested for cannabis possession despite passage of the decriminalization law in 2019.

Arrests are a gateway into the criminal legal system. For individuals convicted of cannabis possession of three ounces or more, or manufacturing or sale, they may be sentenced to incarceration, legal supervision, fines and a lifetime of collateral consequences resulting from a criminal legal record.

The failed War on Drugs in Hawai'i has contributed to severe overcrowding in Hawaii's jails and prisons.⁵ Many people are living in inhumane and unconstitutional conditions of

Additionally, Article I, section 7 of the Hawai'i Constitution states: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches, seizures, and invasions of privacy shall not be violated."

⁴ https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/es_final_web_0.pdf See also, https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/factsheets_final_web_0.pdf

⁵ <https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pop-Reports-EOM-2023-12-31.pdf>

confinement in our carceral facilities while separated from their loved ones, here in Hawai'i and in private for-profit prisons thousands of miles away.

HB1246 includes language providing for the expungement of records of individuals who have low-level arrest and conviction records relating to cannabis. Specifically, individuals who have records for violations that would be legalized in this bill would be expunged by state-initiated action. Additionally, the bill allows for petition-based expungement for possession and distribution offences that have been legalized or decriminalized.

These records have long-lasting impacts on the lives of these individuals. Whether it be their ability to get hired for a job, to secure housing, or even child visitation or custody. These types of non-violent offenders should not have their whole lives negatively impacted by cannabis arrests or convictions. Especially when this bill would make these past violations now legal.

Finally, at least a portion of revenue from the legal sale of cannabis to responsible adults would be prioritized by the Cannabis and Hemp Office to develop and implement comprehensive public health and education programs including the health risks of cannabis use and mechanisms to protect keiki.

The bill also provides for competitively awarded community grants for:

- youth services, including childcare, after-school and summer programs, programs that build youth resiliency, youth recreational centers, services for housing, counseling, and preventing or treating youth substance abuse;
- substance abuse and treatment programs;
- supporting programs for individuals with a dual diagnosis of mental disorder and substance abuse disorder, including services for supportive housing, residential treatment, outpatient treatment, counseling, and other related services.

Like alcohol prohibition a century ago, cannabis prohibition has failed. It wastes taxpayer dollars, perpetuates racial disparities, puts consumers at risk, and locks people up for minor offenses in overcrowded jails and prisons. HB1246 would grow the economy, increase freedom, and promote health and safety. It would also move sales above ground so consumers can buy a lab-tested, regulated product and workers don't face felonies.

We are asking for three amendments, which we believe are keeping with the intent of the bill:

1. Adding language to explicitly prioritize the licensure of legacy growers in **two places**:
 - a. **page 48, line 2 after "by" insert "legacy growers and"**
 - b. **page 154 line 19, after "chapter," insert ", legacy growers,"**
2. Remove the reference to a "randomized lottery" in the preamble:
 - a. **page 34, lines 9-10 delete, "including by randomized lottery selection"**

In closing, mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for consideration of these proposed amendments to ensure a cannabis legalization regulatory system rooted in justice and equity. We hope you will pass out HB1246.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ann Shirota

Carrie Ann Shirota

Policy Director

ACLU of Hawai'i

cshirota@acluhawaii.org

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.



Dedicated to safe, responsible, humane and effective drug policies since 1993

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1246

TO: Chair Tarnas, Vice-Chair Poepoe & JHA Committee Members
Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Kusch & AGR Committee Members

FROM: Nikos Leverenz, Board President

DATE: February 3, 2025 (2:00 PM)

On behalf of Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFH), I am writing in strong support of HB 1246, which would establish the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, legalize personal adult use of cannabis, and establish taxes on the retail sale of adult use cannabis and medical cannabis.

DPFH was instrumental in the passage of statutes authorizing medical cannabis in 2000 and medical cannabis dispensaries in 2015.

DPFH and other members of the [Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform](#) (HACR) remain steadfast that policymakers should take an approach to cannabis legalization that generally avoids increased criminalization and is focused on building an equitable and inclusive industry in every county, reinvests in communities, and provides reparative justice.

This bill contains important provisions that preserves medical cannabis laws, authorizes medical cannabis cooperatives, allows residents to engage in personal cultivation, has provisions for craft cannabis and social equity licenses, protects state and local government employees from being fired or disciplined for positive THC or metabolites, allows for the clearance of cannabis-related arrest and criminal records, and offers a public health grant program that can help fund education, youth programming like afterschool and summer programs, and programs for those with behavioral health challenges.

Cultivating Economic Opportunities & Better Serving Community Needs

States that have legalized adult-use cannabis have encountered challenges in the operation of a functional intrastate market. Excessive regulation and burdensome taxation are among those challenges to be avoided. This bill acknowledges those challenges with its embrace of a variety of cannabis businesses. A regulatory framework that includes craft cannabis and cannabis tourism

can help ensure that economic opportunities are available to many rural communities. The proposed Cannabis and Hemp Office should continually re-evaluate its policies and endeavor to prepare Hawai'i's emerging adult-use cannabis economic sector for prospective participation in a national and global cannabis marketplace.

This state runs the serious risk of not having an adult-use framework in place that will have its farmers and businesses at a competitive disadvantage should cannabis be removed from the Controlled Substances Act. Instead of having an established regulatory entity and an economic sector in every county positioned to enter the national market, the state will see a flood of cheaper cannabis flower and cannabis products from the continent, [including that from large scale multi-state operators](#).

In December 2023, I co-authored [an opinion-editorial in Honolulu Civil Beat](#) with Maui County Councilmember Keani Rawlins-Fernandez and Rep. Jeanne Kapela where we underscored the promotion of meaningful equity throughout the cannabis sector, including production, manufacture, transportation, and sale.

The current hemp industry in this state provides a cautionary and troubling tale about the dangers of over regulation, which this bill largely avoids. Even with federal and state authorization, current participants in this state's anemic industrial hemp market have been stymied by poor regulations and untoward bureaucratic resistance from executive departments.

Similarly, current participants in the vertically-integrated medical cannabis sector have had their operations subject to such resistance, bolstered by the lethargy of policymakers and executive departments that cannot, for example, facilitate the provision science-based, tone-neutral educational materials, employment protections for medical cannabis patients, or access to tinctures and edibles by those in hospice facilities.

As we wrote, "Building a more prosperous, sustainable, and equitable economy in this state should include fair, active, and continuous participation for those living in rural areas of every county. *Cannabis grown by Hawaiian hands on Hawaiian lands should be a key component of that grand effort.*" (emphasis added) We also note that Maine and other states are encouraging a [craft cannabis industry](#) that champions smaller-scale farms.

Acknowledging the Human Wreckage of Prohibition & Charting a New Course Forward

[The current regime of cannabis prohibition, like the larger drug war, compounds the harm of extensive involvement in the criminal legal system by Native Hawaiians](#) and other residents from under resourced communities that are significantly impacted by social determinants of health.

According to data from [the April 2023 Uniform Crime Report](#), 7,457 adults were arrested on cannabis possession charges from 2011-2020.

Cannabis prohibition also reaches children. Here is the line from [that Uniform Crime Report](#) showing the number of juveniles arrested statewide for cannabis possession in Hawaii from 2011-2020 (inclusive):

Drug Possession	Opium or Cocaine	3	5	32	24	7	9	4	9	2	3
	Marijuana	550	504	479	405	343	402	384	380	285	85
	Synthetic Narcotic	6	3	3	3	12	6	0	3	4	3
	Nonnarcotic	8	13	20	22	13	25	23	32	47	7

3,817 total arrests constitutes an improvement over the 5,760 juveniles arrested from 2001-2010. However, it is over four times higher than the total arrests for violations of liquor laws during that period: 925.

Here is the racial breakdown of 2020 juvenile cannabis arrests: 40.1% Pasifika (27.1% Native Hawaiian, 1.2% Samoan, 11.8% Other Pacific Islander), 25.9% White, 16.5% Filipino, 4.7% Other Asian, 3.5% Black, 9.4% Unknown. In short, almost three-quarters non-White, which is an even more pronounced disparity than adult enforcement (63.5% non-White).

[Per 2021 High School YRBS](#), Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders have used cannabis in the past 30 days at the same rate as Whites, 16.5% cf. 16.4%. Asians (including Filipinos) use substantially less, 4.4%, so the disparity is even greater there.

This data prompts serious questions. Are police departments and prosecutors addressing this ongoing enforcement disparity among our state’s children in any constructive or programmatic fashion? With inherent discretion is there an intentional “priming of the pump” for future engagement with the criminal legal system?

Significantly, [19 of 21 states that have legalized adult-use cannabis have seen a reduction in rates of past 30-day cannabis use by youth](#).

Ongoing cannabis prohibition needlessly raises the overall year-to-year costs of Hawai'i’s criminal legal system, where terms of probation or parole are lengthened apart from a more calibrated determination of safety risks to the community. Prolonged periods of probation or parole increase the likelihood of a return to jail or prison at great cost to state taxpayers, which has not been mentioned in public deliberations over a new billion-dollar jail facility on O’ahu. [Even a misdemeanor conviction features many “collateral consequences” that impact an individual’s ability to obtain employment, housing, and education](#).

While cannabis use is not entirely devoid of individual health risks, its use does not produce the injury, illness, and death resulting from regular or problematic use of alcohol or tobacco, two widely used licit substances that are not included in the federal Controlled Substances Act.

DPFH also strongly supports treatment upon request for those with diagnosed substance use disorders. As noted by the American Public Health Association:

Public health approaches offer effective, evidence-based responses, but some of the most effective interventions are not currently allowed in the United States owing to outdated drug laws, attitudes, and stigma. Substance misuse treatment is too often unavailable or unaffordable for the people who want it. A criminal justice response, including requiring arrest to access health services, is ineffective and leads to other public health problems. (Policy Statement, "[Defining and Implementing a Public Health Response to Drug Use and Misuse.](#)")

The Recent Experience of New Mexico

In terms of the costs of implementing a prospective cannabis control authority and bringing a functional, broad based adult-use market, the recent experience of New Mexico can shed light on the significant upside potential of adult use legalization.

For perspective, New Mexico borders two other adult-use states with a population of 2.1 million and a GDP of \$96.5 billion. Its visitor spending was less than half that of Hawai'i in 2023 (\$8 billion v. \$20 billion).

[Per New Mexico's Department of Finance and Administration](#), the costs of the Cannabis Control Division of the Regulation & Licensing Department were \$3.1 million in FY23 and \$3.5 million in FY24, with a recommendation of \$2.3 million in FY25.

[In April 2023, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham noted the successes of the first full year of adult use cannabis](#), including "more than \$27 million in cannabis excise taxes [to] the state general fund and to local communities." Further, "In just one year, hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity has been generated in communities across the state, the number of businesses continues to increase, and thousands of New Mexicans are employed by this new industry."

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Testimony Opposing HB 1246 - Relating to Cannabis

Hearing on Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 2:00 pm
Conference Room 325, Hawaii State Capitol

To: Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Rep David A. Tarnas, Chair
Rep Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Rep Kirstin Kahaloe, Chair
Rep Matthias Kusch Vice Chair

Fr: Alan Shinn
Hawaii SAM
1130 N. Nimitz Hwy, Suite A259
Honolulu, HI 96817

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1246 – Relating to Cannabis which legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis beginning 1/01/26 and establishes the Hawaii Cannabis & Hemp Office to regulate all aspects of cannabis and hemp. In addition, it establishes taxes for adult and medical use cannabis retail sales, adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana, makes appropriations, among other things.

The brain is one of the most important organs in our body. Protecting it and keeping it functional, healthy and trauma free should be a number one priority, especially for adolescents and young adults with developing brains. A new study published in *Jama Network Open* (Jan 28, 2025), found that there was a correlation between recent and lifetime use of marijuana having a negative impact on working memory involved in cognitive tasks such as learning and understanding language. 63% of lifetime heavy cannabis-using participants and 68% of recent cannabis users showed reduced brain activity during their working memory task. While the study is not conclusive, it does raise warning flags. Commercial cannabis is an addiction business much like cigarettes and vaping. It relies on consumers' repeated use of marijuana to make a profit. While not all users will be impacted, no one knows for sure who will have negative brain health consequences as result of the chronic use of high potency marijuana.

Here are some examples of barriers to implementation of HB 1246:

The bill gives too much authority to the Cannabis and Hemp Office (CHO), modeled after the Massachusetts CCB. That state's CCB has been overly influenced by the marijuana industry. In addition, the CHO bureaucracy is extensive and will probably not be supported by cannabis tax revenues, thereby creating a burden on taxpayers.

The potency of cannabis has increased dramatically over the past decades which is linked to various health, mental health and substance use issues, especially in youth. Although the bill does allow CHO to set THC limits, there should be a "potency cap" of 15%, which is reasonable.

Still another example is the proposed cannabis public health and education program. While it is a good idea, it should be done prior to implementing legalization. The program should inform the community of the health and safety risks of marijuana use, especially among youth and young adults, and the impact of commercial marijuana culture on the community. HB 814 – Cannabis Youth Prevention bill is an example of a pro-active approach to informing the youth, parents, and community about commercial cannabis.

Most troubling is that commercial marijuana will dramatically increase incidents of DUI, more accidents, injuries, and deaths on our roads as seen in other legalized marijuana states. The proposed penalties for consuming cannabis or concentrate while operating a motor vehicle seem too lenient and have little deterrence effect. Instead, the bill should propose similar penalties as operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol. A first-time DUI alcohol offense typically results in a range of penalties, i.e., a fine between \$250 and \$1,000, up to one year of license revocation, potential jail time ranging from 2-5 days, and community service up to 72 hours.

Regarding the negative impact of marijuana on the environment here are some facts. Outdoor grow sites consume massive amounts of water, e.g., 29.4M gallons of water per year in California (Greta Wengart, Integral Ecology Research Center CA 29.4M Gallons Marijuana). Indoor grows emit as much CO2 as 3.3M cars (Larkin & Sweeny, 2022). Protecting Hawaii's environment and keeping it pristine and clean should be a priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 1246.

SAM Hawaii is an affiliate of **Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM)**, a national alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to a health-first approach to marijuana policy. SAM seeks a middle road between incarceration and legalization. Our commonsense, third-way approach to marijuana policy is based on reputable science and sound principles of public health and safety.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:15:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Margaret Mejia	Hawai'i Christian Coalition	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB1246 relating to Cannabis for the following reasons:

1. These points are taken from statistics from states who have legalized marijuana:

• Substantial rise in the cost of rent for Hawai'i residents

Drug dealers move into the area who are willing to pay more money for rent. This pushes out local people who have been born and raised here in Hawai'i. People who are poor, middle class & upper class are all affected negatively.

- Drug dealers move into the states where marijuana has been legalized.** Drug dealers bring a mountain of problems with them when they move into an area, such as prostitution, sex trafficking, more lethal drugs including fentanyl, crimes, crimes, and more crimes. These criminals come from all states as well as other countries. **HPD is NOT ready to deal with all of these crimes!**
- High drop-out rate for high school students**

High school students drop out of school at alarming rates. They lose motivation and stop attending school once they start smoking/ingesting marijuana.

- Teenagers and young adults DEATH RATE increased.** Young people are particularly harmed by the legalization of marijuana. Eating marijuana (edibles) are more dangerous than smoking marijuana because it does not take effect immediately so young people eat more, hoping it will take effect, sooner. Immediately after Colorado legalized marijuana, a teenager who was staying at a hotel with friends to eat marijuana, ate too much marijuana and ended up jumping off the balcony. He died. Very sad!!!
- THC in marijuana today is about 25% higher than it was back in 1982.** In 1982, the THC in marijuana was about 2-3%. Today, the THC in marijuana is about 25-30%! And in many cases, with edibles, the drug dealers cannot control the amount of THC in their products. Do the research! This is dangerous!!!
- Legalizing marijuana brings in more dangerous and deadly drugs.** If you think Hawai'i has an "ice" problem, think again. Legalizing marijuana will bring in other drugs from all over the world. We are a "melting pot" for people. Imagina a "melting pot" for drugs! You saw the YouTubes & Tik Toks of drug induced "zombies" literally standing around in cities on the Mainland doing nothing and looking like they were hypnotized,

mindless, etc. What drugs were they on?! It wasn't marijuana but it started with marijuana!

- **Homelessness INCREASED substantially.**

Hawai'i already cannot deal with all the homelessness in Hawai'i. IF marijuana is legalized, you will see the homeless everywhere! Don't legalize it!

These are just a few of the reasons why marijuana should NOT be legalized in Hawai'i. There are many, many more reasons but I want to keep this brief. We are Ohana and a place of Aloha, not a druggie state!



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HIPHI Initiatives

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Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

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Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 3, 2025

To: Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Representative Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

RE: Comments on HB1246, Relating to Cannabis

Hrg: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 2:00 PM, Room 325

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ offers comments on HB1246, which would establish a non-medicinal adult-use cannabis program as well as create a regulatory board within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Protection (DCCA) to oversee and regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Furthermore, it creates a tax for sales of non-medicinal use cannabis.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding the creation of a non-medicinal cannabis program. As this is a complex and multi-faceted issue, with implications for public health, social justice, and the economy, our comments will focus on the public health aspects of this measure.

Fundamental Safety Precautions Need to be Established

Minimum public health protections need to be included in any type of non-medicinal cannabis program. These protections include, but are not limited to minimum age restrictions, protections from secondhand smoke, and regulations on retailers. However, the legalization of non-medicinal cannabis may normalize its use, potentially leading to increased public health risks.

While HIPHI has serious public health concerns about the legalization of non-medicinal cannabis, we support the decriminalization of cannabis possession, recognizing the disproportionate impact of drug use charges and the criminal justice system on Native Hawaiians and other communities of color.

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.



Oversight Should be Managed by the Department of Health

Public health concerns of cannabis use, especially among youth. From a public health perspective, we strongly recommend the oversight of this public health issue to be in the Department of Health (DOH) as they are equipped with the public health knowledge, expertise, and experience with regulating medical cannabis to create regulatory structures that follow best-practice public health guidelines. The DOH's primary focus on health will ensure that the health and safety of the community are at the forefront of regulations of non-medicinal adult-use cannabis. **For this reason, we strongly recommend that the department overseeing the proposed Cannabis Program be the Department of Health.**

Enable Local Regulatory Flexibility

We also recommend that counties be provided the authority to create stricter policies, such as regulating retail outlet density, marketing practices, and high-risk cannabis products. From the lessons learned in public health tobacco control, local authority is a very effective tool in allowing communities to customize policies in ways that support and meet their unique needs and challenges. It also allows local communities to respond quickly to any challenges that may arise within the state statute and respond accordingly in a way that is best suited for their community.

Major Health Risks Require Strong Public Health Expertise

While HIPHI appreciates the legislature's acknowledgment of the need for an Advisory Board to make ongoing recommendations to the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office, none of the stated functions speak directly to the board making recommendations related to the public health impacts of cannabis on the community. It is recommended that language be added to ensure public health impacts are being monitored on an ongoing basis. Additionally, many of these advisory groups succumb to "industry capture" by way of the majority of the board members representing the interests of the commercial cannabis industry. HIPHI recommends amending the advisory board's membership requirements to ensure that at least 20% of the board is composed of individuals with a public health background in substance use.

We thank this committee for creating the opportunity to have meaningful public conversations about the implications of legalizing non-medicinal cannabis. We urge careful consideration of the public health implications and thank the committee for considering our comments on HB1246.

Mahalo,

Rick Collins

Project Director
Hawai'i Public Health Institute



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Staffordshire Moorlands, England
LEAP UK

Date: February 6, 2025

Re: HB 1246 - Act Relating to Cannabis

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture Committees

Dear Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture Committees,

On behalf of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), I write in strong support of HB 1246, which would legalize and regulate adult-use marijuana. We believe that marijuana legalization would reduce violence associated with the drug trade, rebuild police-community trust, free up police to focus on more serious crime, and regulate product quality and safety for responsible adult-use.

LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

Many years in the law enforcement profession have taught us that cannabis prohibition causes more damage and violence than the use of the drug itself. Prohibition forces people who use marijuana into an illicit market that is besieged by gun violence to resolve disputes that legal businesses handle in court. Legalizing and regulating cannabis sales would [reduce drug trade violence](#) and redirect its profits back into the communities that have been harmed the most by the illicit market.

Legalizing marijuana so we can regulate and control it for responsible adult-use would also help promote police-community trust. Across policing, the research underscores that having trust from the people we serve [directly impacts public safety](#). Police are only as strong as our relationships with the public. We can only prevent, detect, and solve crime if witnesses and victims are willing to come forward to report criminal activity and work with us to address it. Given the threat of

possible arrest, adults who use marijuana are less willing to speak with law enforcement. When we arrest someone for drug use and possession, the community sees us [wasting taxpayer resources](#). Legalization would foster better cooperation of the whole community to protect public safety.

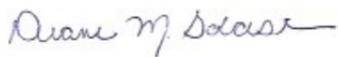
Additionally, legalizing marijuana would free up police time and resources to focus on more serious crime. In 2023, the FBI reported that police made [200,306 arrests](#) for marijuana possession offenses. Most people arrested for marijuana use and possession are not higher-level drug manufacturers and traffickers. Rather, many of these individuals have [little or no prior criminal history](#). We currently dedicate critical resources to arrest and jail people who do not pose a significant threat to public safety. Law enforcement would have more time to focus their attention on [investigating and apprehending perpetrators of violent crime like rape and murder](#), if marijuana is legalized.

Finally, legalizing marijuana would promote public health and safety by guaranteeing state regulation of marijuana product quality and safety. When a drug is illegal, we have no control over it. Nobody needs a license to sell it, so drug dealers can sell it to young people. There is no regulation or responsibility for product quality or purity. When we move forward with legalization, marijuana products on the legal market will be produced by reputable companies and tested for toxins to ensure safe adult-use.

If HB 1246 is passed, Hawaii would join California, Arizona, Nevada, and 24 other states and the District of Columbia in legalizing marijuana for medical and adult-use. Legalization would reduce drug trade violence, help rebuild our community's trust in the police, allow law enforcement to focus their finite resources on serious threats to public safety, and ensure marijuana use is safely regulated. It is a common sense and responsible approach that time has proven to be successful.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this important bill.

Respectfully,



Lt. Diane Goldstein (Ret.)
Redondo Beach Police Department
Executive Director, Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)



February 3, 2025

Re: **HB1246**

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair

Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii STRONGLY OPPOSES HB1246

Aloha Chairs and Vice Chairs, my name is Greg Tjapkes, and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii (CDFH), as a drug abuse prevention youth-serving agency we **STRONGLY OPPOSE HB1246**

Regarding Youth Use, Mental Health, and Suicide:

- **Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD):** Marijuana is the #1 drug **in Hawaii** for adolescent substance abuse treatment¹ with 76% of those seeking help for CUD.
- **Psychosis and Suicidal ideation:** Frequency and higher THC potency are associated with psychosis, suicidality, reshaping of brain matter, and addiction²
- **Vaping Marijuana:** 12.5% of **Hawaii teens** report vaping marijuana³

This bill will benefit very few, cost us dearly. It has the potential to harm many, especially our children, families, and character of the Aloha State.

Please vote no on **HB1246**.

Thank you,

Greg Tjapkes

Executive Director

Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii

¹ ADAD Report to the Legislature 2024, p. 36

² Cinnamon Bidwell et al., 2018; Di Forti et al., 2019; Fischer et al., 2017; Pierre et al., 2016.

³ 2019-2020 Hawai'i Student Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use (ATOD) Survey, p. 38

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 6:47:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Evans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Judiciary and Agriculture committees,

My name is Andrew Evans and I am writing to request your support for HB1246. This bill addressing cannabis legalization is long overdue. I assure you, those who would be accessing cannabis, already are, with or without this bill, but in doing so are exposing themselves to unnecessary personal, health, financial, and legal risk. HB1246 is essential for providing our brothers and sisters access to **safe, regulated** cannabis that is above-board in the eye of our government.

Let's catch up with the rest of our progressive states. I appreciate your support in passing HB1246.

Mahalo,

Andrew

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 7:05:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Yatsushiro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is completely IRRESPONSIBLE legislation and if you think that the implementation of "extensive, well-funded public health protections, including a public health and education campaign to inform the public about the new laws, the continuing risks to public health – especially to children – posed by cannabis" is going to actually *deter* children from possession, use and experimentation, you're showing how out of touch you really are with today's youth.

Do you actually think that kids won't notice the hypocrisy? And then what? You're going to tell the kids, "Do as I say, not as I do" and think you're going to maintain credibility, respect and authority with them?

HB1246 even spells out what the result is going to be and what we can look forward to: "financial assistance for public health services, such as addiction and substance abuse treatment" - *THAT'S* the legacy you want to bestow on our keiki so a minority of adults can indulge themselves in stuff they should stay away from?

I totally support the use of medical marijuana; I've seen the difference it makes with cancer patients and in those instances, it is a Godsend BUT HB1246 is not that. In this instance, **marijuana is not serving a need but promoting use where there is no need**, only a hedonistic want.

Just because an idea is popular doesn't make it right.

You're supposed to be our community leaders, elected to look out for the community's health and safety - HB1246 does not do so but instead caters to a select few who would otherwise go to jail for self-indulgent, self-serving and mind-altering drug use.

Pass HB1246 and know that *you will be personally responsible* for every accident, overdose, crime, addiction and consequence that will result.

Again, this is completely irresponsible legislation. I stand in **STRONG OPPOSITION** and you should too.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 8:25:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Faccenda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Prohibition has never been an effective way to manage substances such as cannabis or other drugs. Regulations, such as this will generate revenue for the state and keep money out of the hands of organized crime

Mahalo for your consideration,

Kevin Faccenda,

Honolulu

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 10:12:42 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Gordon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Want to share some of my comments regarding legalizing marijuana the State:

- Recreational cannabis is legal in almost half of the U.S. States including Washington DC and Guam even in some of the more conservative States
- Use of Cannabis is much safer and has much less detrimental and long term effects than smoking and alcohol, with the latter two both being legal
- No fatal overdoses reported in the Literature
- This would be another industry besides tourism
- Would be a tremendous increase in tax revenue for the State
- Can still be controlled and managed by DOH
- Allows tourists, as well as residents to purchase

Please Support this Bill.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:11:40 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Jaworowski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in support of HS1246, Relating to Cannabis. This lengthy bill would legalize non-medical use of cannabis (aka marijuana) for adults at the state level. I do not partake in marijuana myself, but I am a lawyer and a professor and I do teach civic education to college students. Almost everyone in Hawaii knows somebody who partakes of marijuana, be it a friend or family or fellow student or coworker or neighbor. It is well known that marijuana causes far less physical and medical issues than alcohol, which is legal, and it is difficult to convey the belief that a good citizen follows the laws in the face of a blatantly unbelievable statute. When 24 states legalize marijuana, for us to keep it as a criminal offense makes us look shortsighted and out of touch. It also tends to encourage people to be scofflaws. And if they lose faith in complying with this law, it is a small step to incorporate the belief that laws are not the basis of a well-ordered society, but are a buffet where one can simply choose to comply with the things one believes in and can ignore the rest. I think this is a slippery and dangerous slope. I think it is much better to have solid, reasonable laws that we require all our citizens to follow, and at this point in time this mandates legalization of marijuana in Hawaii

It is time to stop being so timid. The sky will not fall if we legalize marijuana, just as it did not fall in Colorado or Washington or Illinois or Massachusetts or New York or the many other states who have decriminalized it. Please support HB 1246.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 7:36:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Samuel M Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1246. I don't smoke pot but I think Hawaii needs to up date it laws & rules.

Sam Mitchell Makiki NB-10

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:58:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

[HB 1246 Relating to Cannabis](#) will have **serious consequences for our Keiki, families, and communities**, including:

- ✘ Increased youth access** and negative health impacts
- ✘ Higher traffic risks** from drug-impaired driving
- ✘ A thriving black market**, despite regulation

Please think of the consequences, I can

speak from experience. Cannabis was my

gateway drug and it led to many more, and

finally to a drug treatment program. I urge you to think of our keiki's future.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:04:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KRISTEN KIRNBAUER	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the legislators of Hawaii:

I strongly oppose HB1246. It will not be good because it will make cannabis more available to minors. Growing up in California, I saw firsthand how high schoolers that smoked marijuana became very unmotivated to pursue anything. They did worse in their classes, they weren't motivated to pursue a career or even desire to pursue future goals.

Maybe some people can live a normal life while using recreational marijuana, but just like alcohol, many cannot. I believe this measure will add more costs for the tax payers of Hawaii to combat the negative impacts of cannabis.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:27:29 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carm Celine Akim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Representatives,

Cannabis use disorder is the most commonly reported illegal substance use disorder in the general population. Making Cannabis LEGAL will not improve how this substance is consumed nor protect the recreational consumer and the general public from its ill effects. As a healthcare provider and active community volunteer, our state and systems already cannot mitigate the current drug misuse and addiction of our residents. I have taken care of a spectrum of patients from otherwise healthy pregnant women who occasionally smoked marijuana prior to pregnancy now with severe vomiting/nausea requiring multiple days of hospitalization to men who have consistently used this potent drug since they were teens who now have unmanageable behavioral disorders.

These clients with psychological disorders caused by illegal drug use such as marijuana have been taxing our healthcare more than more complex acute medical issues (stroke, heart attack, sepsis, etc). It takes a lot of time for us to care for these clients who might not have a medical or surgical diagnosis but are still in the hospital because there is no facility or caregivers who are willing to take them. Strong evidence-based studies have consistently shown Marijuana/Cannabis use disorder is hard to treat and not all psychological therapies will be effective even though an individual decides to seek help to break free from their cannabis use.

Let the legislature focus on solving the issues of current drug misuse and abuse that have plagued the islands for generations. Legalizing Cannabis for recreational does not justify all the ill outcomes and the burden it creates on our barely surviving community health.

Sincerely,

Carm Akim, RN MSN WCC

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 11:43:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph-paul Akim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As Kanaka, cannabis/marijuana/weed has not helped us native people but put us under a delusion. I have lost loved ones from their misuse of this illegal drug. There is no sense in making marijuana legal. The black market will still operate and this will not entice current users to buy legally where they pay the state more tax.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 12:53:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ron Yoshida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee and Honorable Representatives,

First of all I want to say Mahalo for all you do to help improve the quality of life for all of us in our beloved Hawaii. I'm writing to express my sincere and heartfelt PPSITION to SB3335, a bill that would legalize the recreational use of marijuana. I know that marijuana use is rampant all over Hawaii and especially by our youth, especially through vaping and edibles. My concern is that if we legalize recreational marijuana, access to marijuana and marijuana products will be so much easier to get. I know this will add funds to our economy, but the negative impact would far outweigh the financial benefits. Negative impacts such as the increase in marijuana related crime, car accidents due to driving while "high", young people overdosing due to vaping THC oil, and the list goes on and on, as statistics have shown in other States, such as Colorado, and regon.

The marijuana of the 1960s and 70s is nowhere near as strong in its THC content as it is today (5% back then to now upwards of 80%). Also as a former Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC) in Hawaii, I have seen the detrimental effects Cannabis use has had on youth and their families. Marijuana also continues to be a "Gateway drug" and therefore I cannot agree with the Governor's statement that this will decrease the use of harder drugs by users. Here is an article in Psychology Today that support this:

From Psychology Today:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/all-about-addiction/201807/is-marijuana-gateway-drug?amp>

"Is Marijuana a Gateway Drug?

There is a lot of debate about whether marijuana is actually a harmful drug and whether it does act as a gateway to more "hard" drugs like cocaine, heroin, and more.

A recent research article sought to examine whether the use of marijuana really produced reductions in opioid use. It used a large dataset from a well established national survey that was conducted between 2001 and 2005 to answer this question. The overall results suggested that **marijuana use actually significantly and substantially increased the odds that a person would misuse opioid medication after using marijuana.** This large study, published in a respected psychiatric journal, was used in some recent articles to remind us of the gateway theory of marijuana use, which I think deserves some more thought."

I humbly asked you to please vote "No" on this bill.

Much Mahalo,
Ron Yoshida
(808) 265-5566

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:19:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steven Jay Gladman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill. It will destroy our youth and overwhelm our legal system.

Drugs are drugs. You cannot sugar coat it.

It will destroy the family unit

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 3:14:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dan Powers	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in opposition of HB 1246 legalizing recreational marijuana use. I strongly discourage this and would ask what do the members who are sponsoring this bill have to personally gain by the passing of it?

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 5:20:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivian Aiona	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Re: **HB1246**

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB1246, AS PROVEN in the destroyed cities/states that have passed the absurd use of RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA ie Washington, Colorado, California (San Francisco) - have you seen ANY photos of their filthy streets, where families and children can no longer pass through walkways to schools and parks?!

- IT IS A GATEWAY DRUG. ASK ANY DRUG USER, DRUG COURT OFFICIAL, DRUG ABUSE THERAPIST
- THE T.H.C. CONTENT AND UNKNOWN ADDITIVES ARE KILLING YOUNGSTERS WHO ARE HALLUCINATING, SPIRALING, AND TAKING THEIR OWN LIVES
- WHAT POSSIBLE GAIN IS A TAX REVENUE WHEN FAMILIES AND LIVES ARE DESTROYED
- COME UP WITH BETTER IDEAS FOR TAX REVENUE

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 8:18:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jasmine Duda	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this because this would allow for our Hawai'i Keiki to access this at an early age, potentially be a life long habit, and have negative health impacts. There would be an increased of motor vehicle accidents from drug-impaired driving. It would also promote black markets despite regulation.

Please consider the following questions: Would you want your keiki or grandchild spending money on drugs? Would you want your keiki or grandchild or any other member of your Ohana wasting precious time looking for, obtaining, and smoking marijuana when they could be doing other productive things to better themselves or others? When you vote on this who are you aiming to please or help? Think about our keiki. Please use your position to protect our keiki from harmful effects of this bill. Mahalo for your service to our community.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:51:29 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr Marion Ceruti	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB1245 because it will have a bad effect on our young people. They will be driving while high on pakalolo. Some drivers are already dangerous to others now now. Accidents will increase. Imagine having to respond to an emergency with the brain numb due to pakalolo. Besides, the last thing we need is another government agency. The black market will continue as it is now to avoid paying the tax. Stop this bill now. It will send the wrong message to young people.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:14:29 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Guy Yatsushiro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Opposed

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 10:45:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Rzonca	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do not legalize recreational cannabis. There are so many good reasons this is not a good idea and one is because Hawaii, with it's livable outdoor climate year round, will attract all homeless drug/marijuana users from other states and our homeless non productive population will grow exponentially as well as the cost to taxpayers to fund all the government programs they will be utilizing. It's a bad idea all around.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:09:44 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Smart	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I most strongly oppose HB 1246.

There are known health dangers including a reduction in user’s Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Although 3 classes of users are listed, the bill omits the most obvious – the youth who will get access and abuse the drug. You may try to restrict marijuana to patients, adults, and hemp products, but you will fail. The bill even refers to a youth who had access to a hemp derived product and had a negative health incident.

According to the Congressional Research Service report dated May 2, 2024:

1. “Due to its status as a Schedule I controlled substance, the CSA currently prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensation, and possession of marijuana except in federal government-approved research studies.”
1. “Marijuana is a psychoactive drug that generally consists of leaves and flowers of the cannabis sativa plant. Marijuana is a Schedule I controlled substance under the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA; 21 U.S.C. §801 et seq.), and thus is strictly regulated by federal authorities. In contrast, over the last several decades, most states and territories have deviated from a comprehensive prohibition of marijuana and have laws and policies allowing for some cultivation, sale, distribution, and possession of marijuana.
2. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States. According to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2022 an estimated 61.9 million individuals aged 12 or older used marijuana in the past year, and 42.3 million reported using it in the past month (NSDUH defines *current use* as past month use). The percentage of individuals 12 or older who reported past-month marijuana use gradually increased from 6.1% in 2008 to 15.0% in 2022—a time frame during which a majority of states repealed state criminal prohibitions on marijuana and allowed for its recreational

and/or medical use. The rate of past-month marijuana use among youth (ages 12-17) has fluctuated during this time—it was 7.0% in 2008 and 6.4% in 2022, while adult (ages 18+) use steadily increased—from 6.3% in 2008 to 15.9% in 2022.

3. According to Missouri Medicine:
 1. “Alex Berenson, author of *Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence*, pointed out that the *New York Times* had curiously removed from an article about the Uvalde school shooter a former coworker’s recollection that he complained about his grandmother not letting him smoke weed. The *Times* didn’t append a correction to the story as it might be expected to do when fixing a factual inaccuracy.”
 2. “Assuming the elided detail was accurate, it would fit a pattern. Mass shooters at Rep. Gabby Giffords’s constituent meeting in Tucson, Ariz. (2011), a movie theater in Aurora, Colo. (2012), the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla. (2016), the First Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas (2017), and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. (2018), were reported to be marijuana users. It could be a coincidence, but increasing evidence suggests a connection.”
 3. “Isn’t pot supposed to make you mellow? Maybe if you smoke only a joint on occasion. But youth nowadays are consuming marijuana more frequently and in higher doses than their elders did when they were young.”
 4. “This is leading to increased addiction and antisocial behavior. THC, the chemical that causes a euphoric high, interacts with the brain’s neuron receptors involved with pleasure. Marijuana nowadays on average is about four times as potent as in 1995. But dabs—portions of concentrated cannabis—can include 20 times as much THC as joints did in the 1960s. It’s much easier for young people to get hooked. One in six people who start using pot while under 18 will develop an addiction, which doctors call “cannabis use disorder.” As they use the drug more frequently to satisfy cravings, they develop psychological and social problems.”
4. This legislature recently banned flavored vape “for the children” – which has far fewer negative side effects than marijuana – yet instead of banning it, the legislature is flouting federal law and turning Hawaii into a sanctuary state for marijuana. This is a very bad idea.
5. The statement: “The legislature further finds that cannabis cultivation and sales hold the potential for economic development, increased tax revenues, and reduction in crime” is full of unwarranted positive expectations. The exact opposite is likely to occur. The unwanted social and criminal activities will surely increase. The cost of public safety and rehabilitation services will exceed any tax revenue from taxing cannabis.
6. The reasons given for increasing access to cannabis are not compelling at all.
7. This bill promotes another tax scheme to deprive residents of their hard earned salaries. We believe the changes regarding criminal justice reform jeopardize the safety of our families, many of our public opinions have not changed, and social “equity” promotion is another phase used to make “socialism” sound palatable to the general public. We don’t want “social justice”, we want justice.
8. The hopes that this policy change will provide substantial benefits to the state hasn’t panned out for other states and it won’t for Hawaii as well. Ohio Senate is looking to roll back cannabis laws. States such as that had cannabis on the ballot, such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Massachusetts, and Mimi-Dade county voted against legalizing marijuana.

9. This testimony covers only a small portion of the negative changes in Hawaii that will occur if less restrictions are implemented regarding access to and use of cannabis products.
10. Do not pass HB1246. Protect our state from this very bad policy.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:14:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Puppione	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*“Aloha, my name is Greg, and I live in Honolulu. I’m testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai’i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!”*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:15:41 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shawn Michelle Wallen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

As a responsible citizen of the State of Hawai'i, I oppose HB 1246. I feel strongly about this because if passed it will **increase youth access** and negative health impacts as it has been proven to be a gateway drug. There will be **Higher traffic risks** from drug-impaired driving. And it will produce a **thriving black market**, despite regulation.

Mahalo for your kind consideration and serving the people of Hawai'i.

Shawn Michelle Wallen

2750 Oma'opio Road

Kula, Hawai'i 96790

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:25:32 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William P Hardrict	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is William P Hardrict, and I live in Kapolei. I'm testifying in support of H.B. 1246 to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for true public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:29:14 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amira Elswi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Amira and I live in Hawai'i Kai. I'm testifying in support of H.B. 1246 to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer but instead waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our jails and prisons which are already severely overcrowded. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for true public safety programs such as youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. We cannot reimagine criminal justice in Hawai'i without new laws such as HB1246 legalizing adult-use cannabis! Mahalo for your time.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:34:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larissa Cruz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha, my name is Larissa, and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time.*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:39:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Blair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 11:47:24 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kerestin Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha, my name is Kerestin Walker and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true public** safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:03:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Schaefer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*“Aloha, my name is Amanda Schaefer, and I live in Haiku, Hawai‘i. I am 39 years and old and am not now, nor have ever been a cannabis user. However, I’m testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, break up families, and incarcerate people unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai‘i can raise millions of dollars for **important** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!”*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:05:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nathan Leo Braulick	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Nathan Leo Braulick, and I live in Honolulu.

I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons.

By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

Mahalo,

Nathan Leo Braulick

96826

Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Comm. Chair David Tarnas and V-Chair Mahina Poepoe
Committee members: Della Au Belatti; Elle Cochran; Mark Hashem; Kirstin Kahaloe; Amy
Perruso; Gregg Takayama; Chris Todd; Diamond Garcia and Garner Shimizu

Agriculture & Food Systems Comm. Chair Kirstin Kahaloe and VChair Matthias Kusch
Committee members: Nicole Lowen, Amy Perruso, Sean Quinlan and Gene Ward

Please note that I continue to stand in strong opposition to this bill HB1246, relating to
Cannabis

Last session under SB1399 I noted that many of those who supported the cannabis bill were
also involved in cultivating and in many cases would be able to benefit with this bill moving
forward.

On the opposing side we had the Department of Law Enforcement; University of Hawai'i
System; Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu;
Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Maui; Hawai'i Police Department;
Honolulu Police Department; Kaua'i Police Department; Maui Police Department; Hawaii Family
Forum; One Impact Hawaii; Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition; among many others just to
name a few.

I noted on that Committee reports, those individuals supporting and opposing were referred to
as "numerous" I find this unacceptable. Numbers should be provided to give us a true view of
support & opposition.

As with the previous bill this one appears to anticipate fees and taxes will be generated! aka
income for the state.

I disagree, based on the passing of this bill, decriminalizing cannabis,

- ◇ retailers will need to rent store space from which cannabis can be sold
and equip it
 - ◇ they will also need to hire staff and pay for employee benefits
 - ◇ these will be the taxes fed and state taxes ... and of course GET!
- ◇ creation of Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office, to regulate all aspect of the cannabis plant
How much money are we talking about here?
 - ◇ I wonder what all this will have on the cost of the cannabis?
With that in mind ...
 - √ what a significant discount on the cost if the potential buyer
went back to the dealer down the street!
 - √ No taxes, no GET, no overhead, no employees and benefits ...
 - √ Illegal? True but if caught wouldn't it just be a minor offense?
 - √ all that might not generate money for the state,
but might add additional burden on the people of Hawaii ...

With all due respect I ask you to think about this carefully and vote no on passing this bill
HB1246 out of committee.

Respectfully,
Rita Kama-Kimura
Submitted 01/30/2025

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 12:27:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kuulei Salzer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:06:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Don Baluran	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please oppose this bill. Mahalo!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:23:30 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

YES to- Establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the Department of Health and assets of the Department of Agriculture relating to cannabis to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. Appropriates funds

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1246

RE: Decriminalization of Cannabis & Investment in Social Equity and Public Health

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB1246. I believe the transition from a medical cannabis only state to a dual-use state is a far more effective approach to the promotion of public health and safety than seeking to preserve the current regulations on cannabis cultivation, use and/or sale where instead, I support a model that redirects our investments in public health and welfare, which includes economic and environmental models toward social equity and public health programs rather than punitive enforcement. As an example, the evidence from Portugal's bold and successful approach to drug policy reform provides an undeniable blueprint for improving public health, reducing crime, and enhancing the overall well-being of our communities.

Portugal's Proven Success: A Model for Hawai'i

Portugal's journey offers critical insights into the potential outcomes of supporting HB1246. In 1990, Portugal decriminalized all drug use, shifting the nation's approach from punitive enforcement to a health-centered model. At the time, Portugal ranked among the lowest of over 150 nations in terms of average life expectancy, plagued by high crime rates and widespread substance abuse issues. Today, the nation (*currently ranked at 22*) has surpassed the United States (*currently ranked at 47*) in life expectancy and is projected to reach the 5th highest rank globally by 2040. This remarkable transformation was not due to increased incarceration or behavior control but rather to robust social and health programs that emphasized rehabilitation, harm reduction, and reintegration into society.

By focusing on prevention, treatment, and harm reduction rather than criminalization or behavior control for drug use, Portugal saw not only a steep decline in overall drug use but also a generational decrease in substance dependency. Their crime rates plummeted, and societal stability increased as formerly incarcerated individuals were given opportunities to reintegrate into their communities with support and dignity. These outcomes demonstrate the profound benefits of treating substance use, whether for medical or recreational, as a public health issue rather than a criminal offense.

The Need for Change in Hawai'i

Criminal justice reformers have long argued Hawaii locks up more people each year than is necessary to protect public health and safety, burdening our prisons and draining public resources. HB1246 presents a pragmatic, evidence-based solution towards practices and policies that align with the successes observed in Portugal:

- 1. Ending Unnecessary Criminalization** – Supporting prohibited conduct for individuals, including public smoking and open container, enacting HB1246 will allow the transition

from a medical cannabis only state to a dual-use state, allowing individuals to engage in its responsible cultivation, use and/or sale without fear of arrest or prosecution.

2. **Record Expungement & Second Chances** – The bill creates a pathway for expungement of records for those arrested and/or convicted for cannabis-related crimes. This means increased access to jobs, housing, and educational opportunities for individuals whose lives have been negatively impacted by the war on drugs.
3. **Economic & Social Equity Investment** – HB1246 establishes a more sound commercial/economic model and promotes social equity and public health grant programs to support historically disadvantaged and impoverished communities such as the Native Hawaiian community. This ensures that the individuals and neighborhoods most harmed by the war on drugs receive resources for economic empowerment and healthcare.
4. **Public Health & Safety Benefits** – Removing the stigma of criminalization allows individuals to seek help for substance-related issues without fear and frees up law enforcement to focus on more pressing public safety concerns while preserving medical cannabis use and increasing access to effective medical treatment(s).

Overcoming Fear with Facts

Critics of HB1246 may express concerns about relinquishing control over cannabis-related behaviors. However and despite not focused solely on cannabis, Portugal's experience proves that decriminalization and stopping the over-regulation of drug use does not equate to rampant drug use. In fact, by replacing punitive measures with structured health and social programs, Portugal witnessed a decline in both experimental and long-term over-all drug use, particularly among younger generations. With respect to the cultivation, use and/or sale of cannabis, Hawai'i has the opportunity to follow this proven path and create a public health and welfare system that prioritizes human well-being over outdated enforcement and/or behavior control models.

Conclusion

The evidence is clear: transitioning Hawai'i from a medical cannabis only state to a dual-use state is a far more effective approach than seeking to preserve the current regulations on cannabis cultivation, use and/or sale. HB1246 offers Hawai'i an opportunity to continue it's shift from ineffective, over-regulated, punitive policies to a model that fosters public health, social justice, and economic efficiency. By embracing this legislation, we can continue to undo the harms of the past and build a future where all members of our community have the support they need to thrive.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB1246. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Robert Quartero

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 1:55:36 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erik Barton	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose because of past unhealthy addiction to marijuana and know/realize the ill effects of it.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 2:20:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Shorba	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

Please DO NOT Legalize Recreational Marijuana...and please **oppose HB 1246!** HB 1246 will have **serious consequences for our keiki, families, and communities**, including:

Increased youth access and negative health impacts.

Higher traffic risks from drug-impaired driving.

A thriving black market, despite regulation.

Protect our home and our people from the negative effects of the recreational use of marijuana and DO NOT PASS HB 1246.

Mahalo,

Lisa Shorba

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 2:22:07 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julya Bridgewater	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*“Aloha, my name is Julya Bridgewater and I live in Kailua Kona. I’m testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

it is common for cancer patients and older people to use cannabis for pain and sleep. It is an unnecessary burden to have to jump,through all the hoops to get a medical card.

*Additionally, Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai’i can raise millions of dollars for **true**public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.*

Mahalo,

Julya Bridgewater

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 2:37:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Colleen Rost-Banik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Colleen Rost-Banik, and I live in Waikiki. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

While I personally do not like recreational use of cannabis, nor do I enjoy the smell of it when walking down the street, more disturbing to me are cannabis prohibition laws, which perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, leave people in debt from fines and court fees, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. Policing cannabis does not make our communities safer. Please support HB1246 so that tax dollars can be shifted away from policing cannabis use and toward supportive programs like youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing, the real things that keep our communities safer.

Mahalo for your time.
Colleen Rost-Banik, Ph.D.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 3:23:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha, my name is Kathy Shimata, and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste police time & taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our antiquated jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, addiction treatment, and supportive housing.*

Mahalo for your time.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 6:25:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Ziadie	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly urge you to vote NO. Legalizing cannabis will destroy our communities and our island the way it has done to towns in CA, AK, OR, WA, etc. Cannabis destroys the reward center in the brain as well as all functions of a human's intellect. We cannot afford any more harm to our Ohana. Please vote NO. The reason why smoking was banned in restaurants years ago was due to the danger of secondhand smoke. How much more dangerous is cannabis secondhand smoke?! I have upper respiratory medical issues and occasionally I'm sick with the stench (it is a stench) of cannabis while out in my yard and minding my business when neighbors illegally send their smoke across the street (carried by the wind). I cannot fathom what this will be like if it gets legalized. Lastly I work for an agency that prohibits drug use and out of risk of having my health and career ruined by secondhand cannabis smoke is unacceptable.

please vote NO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 6:42:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patti Yasuhara	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote No to HB1246. Mahalo, Patti Yasuhara

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 6:51:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Ziadie	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB1246.

Legalizing use of cannabis will have serious consequences to our families and communities. This will allow increase access of cannabis to youth which may lead to negative health impacts, higher traffic risks from drug impaired individuals thus more negative impact to health/ lives.

A friend of mine told me that she feels like a prisoner in her own home because her neighbor smokes cannabis daily and all that smell and smoke drifts into her home which causes respiratory issues & very unpleasant smell.... she has to shut all her windows daily.

Our restaurants are now smoke free and so should our towns be cannabis free . We have enough chemicals in our food we don't need them in our air.

thank you for voting NO

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 8:40:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara J. Service	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa and committee members,

Please support HB1246, the personal adult use of marijuana and also decriminalize drug offenses relating to marijuana or marijuana concentrate.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify.

Barbara J. Service MSW,

Child Welfare Supervisor (ret.)

Kupuna advocate

Bderivatives.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/30/2025 10:13:46 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JOHN L PANG	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill like I did last year. It is not good for society regardless of the times. Money does not justify recreational use of cannibalism. I am a pharmacist and spent my entire career making sure legal or illegal drugs are used appropriately. Keep the use medicinal only. Do not approve illicit cannabis use. It will destroy the fabric of our families, communities and education system. Once evil gets its foot into the doorway, it will jeopardize our morals and goodness. There is no safe space for cannabis in Hawaii. Keep Hawaii safe and clean.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB1246

RELATING TO CANNABIS.

Thursday, January 30, 2025

To: Rep. David A. Tarnas, Chair, Rep. Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair, and Members of the COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS;

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair, Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair, and Members of the COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

From: Ronnie Inagaki

Subject: Opposition to HB1246 – RELATING TO CANNABIS.

ear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, I am writing to express my opposition to HB1246, which proposes significant changes to Hawaii's cannabis laws, including the legalization of adult-use cannabis and the establishment of the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office. While this measure aims to create a comprehensive framework for cannabis regulation, it raises serious concerns about the potential negative impacts on medical cannabis patients, who rely on this program for their health and well-being.

Key Concerns for Medical Cannabis Patients

1. Transition of Oversight to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office

- The transfer of regulatory authority from the Department of Health to the newly created Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office may cause delays and disruptions in the medical cannabis program.
- Patients may face difficulties during this transition, including delays in processing registrations, renewals, and changes to existing operations.

2. Potential Impact on Medical Cannabis Supply

- Allowing existing medical cannabis dispensaries to transition into the adult-use market could shift their focus away from serving medical cannabis patients.
- This could lead to shortages of medical cannabis products, leaving vulnerable patients without adequate access to their medication.

3. Increased Costs for Patients

- A 4% tax on medical cannabis sales, as proposed in this bill, adds an unnecessary financial burden on patients who already face high medical costs.

- If medical cannabis dispensaries prioritize the more lucrative adult-use market, prices for medical cannabis products could increase, further limiting access for low-income patients.

4. Restrictions on Cultivation

- The bill limits the number of cannabis plants that patients and caregivers can cultivate for medical use to ten plants per residence.
- This restriction may not meet the needs of patients with chronic or severe medical conditions who require larger quantities of cannabis.

5. Reduced Focus on Medical Cannabis

- Legalizing adult-use cannabis may shift public and regulatory attention away from the medical cannabis program, deprioritizing the needs of patients who rely on cannabis as medicine.

6. Access for Minors

- While the bill allows minors to use medical cannabis under the supervision of a caregiver, strict requirements, such as written consent from a parent or guardian, may create barriers for children with debilitating conditions who need medical cannabis.

7. Public Health Risks

- The bill includes public health campaigns but does not adequately address the specific needs of medical cannabis patients, such as reducing stigma or providing accurate information about the benefits and risks of medical cannabis.

8. Zoning and Local Restrictions

- Counties are allowed to impose zoning restrictions on cannabis businesses. This could limit the availability of dispensaries in certain areas, making it more difficult for patients, particularly those in rural areas, to access their medicine.

9. Employment Protections

- The bill allows exceptions to employment protections for medical cannabis patients in "safety-sensitive positions," which may leave patients with limited employment opportunities.

10. Complexity of New Regulations

- The introduction of new regulations, licenses, and oversight mechanisms could confuse patients and caregivers. Clear communication and support will be essential to ensure patients understand their rights under the new system.

Request

I urge the committee to carefully consider the unintended consequences of HB1246 on Hawaii's medical cannabis patients. While adult-use legalization may provide economic benefits, it should not come at the expense of the health and well-being of patients who rely on medical cannabis. I respectfully request the following amendments to HB1246 to address these concerns:

- Maintain dedicated protections for medical cannabis patients, including ensuring adequate supply and affordability.
- Exempt medical cannabis patients from any taxation on medical cannabis purchases.
- Strengthen safeguards to ensure that the medical cannabis program is not deprioritized or undermined by the adult-use market.
- Ensure that the transition to the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office is seamless, with no disruptions to patient services.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I urge you to protect the rights and needs of Hawaii's medical cannabis patients by either amending or rejecting HB1246.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ronnie Inagaki
Email: rinagaki69@gmail.com

January 30, 2025

Trevor Nagamine
PO Box 37966
Honolulu, HI 96837
tnagamine.nb25@gmail.com

Rep. David Tarnas, Chair
Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i State House of Representatives
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 442
Honolulu, HI 96813

Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Hawai'i State House of Representatives
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 403
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB1246 — RELATING TO CANNABIS

Dear Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Trevor Nagamine, and I am a resident of Mililani. I am also a member of Neighborhood Board No. 25 (Mililani/Waipio/Melemanu); however, I am submitting this testimony in my individual capacity, and this testimony does not reflect an official position of Neighborhood Board No. 25. I am writing today in support of HB1246.

Using marijuana is a benign activity that should be legalized. Additionally, the proposal to tax sales of marijuana/cannabis will provide revenues beneficial to the State.

I respectfully ask that the committees pass HB1246. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Mahalo,

Trevor Nagamine

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 8:34:37 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Chinen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose HB1246 because the negative impact far outweighs any benefits. I'm most concerned about how this will breakdown the strength of our families and the negative effects it will have on our keiki. Please please do not pass this bill to protect the future of our keiki and ohana.

Thank you and blessings!

Erin Chinen

Registered voter in Kaneohe

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 9:26:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
SOPHIA S SOTELO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Sophia Sotelo, and I live in Kea'au on Moku o Keawe. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Please note how the State of Colorado has successfully implemented legalization of cannabis.

Cannabis is extremely efficacious when used for pain control and can replace opiate analgesics, thereby reducing the risk of opiate addiction and rehabilitating those who are already in the throes of addiction. Cannabis can also assist women going thru the side-effects of menopause (pre/peri/post) by relieving insomnia. Medical studies have shown that sufficient, restful sleep optimizes health. Other studies have also shown how cannabis has successfully aided many veterans suffering from PTSD by withdrawing them from chemical narcotics and antidepressants.

Mahalo nui nui.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:08:18 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laurie M. Lawson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying as a parent and as a grandmother, and as someone who knows intimately the dangers of cannabis and other drugs. This almost destroyed my life as a teenager and I'm now watching it have serious repercussions on the mental health of one of my children. Cannabis should be controlled solely for medical conditions and not be promoted for personal use. The consequences will be severe on our society. Don't just take my word for it, take a look at what has happened in states like Colorado and California that have loosened the restrictions on cannabis. And also Oregon. Do your homework. Do not allow this to destroy our beautiful state of Hawaii.

finally, we are a State that depends heavily on tourism. Families with children might think twice about vacationing in a state where cannabis is freely used and consumed. It's bad enough right now-I can smell cannabis being smoked in our parks and recreation areas. Passing this bill would make it worse.

thank you

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 12:41:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cindy R Ajimine	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE this bill moving forward and am appalled that despite having fought this in 2024, it's back again. Why?

- 1) Other states who have legalized this are dealing with multiple negative issues.
- 2) Our youth will be subjected to temptations to use, worsening social, emotional, physical, long term health.
- 3) Potential for illegal black marketing (like we see with fireworks) & more crime.

AYMAN EL-SWAIFY PUBLIC TESTIMONY
HB1246 - RELATING TO CANNABIS

Good Afternoon, House Members. My name is Ayman El-Swaify and I am OPPOSED to House Bill 1246.

Among other related things, this House Bill establishes a new Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, and legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis effective January 1, 2026.

As justification for its passing, the Bill states that an increasing number of states have legalized recreational marijuana and witnessed substantial benefits from the revenue generated, and that the legalization of cannabis for personal use is a natural outgrowth of the current science of and attitude toward cannabis. Along with increased tax revenues, it even goes so far as to state that we can expect a reduction in crime.

As noble as these objectives may sound, they aren’t compelling when we consider social risks. I am not sure what basis there is for the claim that science backs such legalization, or that crime will actually decrease as a result of it. I think the crime argument is moot since studies are shallow and don’t seem to provide convincing evidence either way. Nevertheless, the raft of prior marijuana legalizations across the globe have given us case studies that demonstrate likely societal costs. I hope and pray that my testimony today helps you appreciate these downsides to this proposed legislation.

I will focus on two issues in my testimony and provide a sampling of documented, scientific evidence.

(1) Firstly there are the physical health issues.

A 2022 study published in the Journal Radiology, and reported on by the Wall Street Journal on 11/15/22, observed that marijuana smokers displayed higher rates of emphysema, bronchial thickening, bronchiectasis, mucoid impaction, and gynecomastia.

Per the CDC website, “Cannabis and Public Health”...

- (a) Cannabis use directly affects brain function—specifically the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision making, coordination, emotions, and reaction time.
- (b) Cannabis can make the heart beat faster and raise blood pressure immediately after use. It could also lead to increased risk of stroke, heart disease, and other vascular diseases.
- (c) Edibles, or food and drink products infused with cannabis, have some different risks than smoked cannabis, including a greater risk of poisoning.

(2) Secondly, there are the psychological health issues.

Today’s marijuana is incredibly potent compared with what folks my age may remember from the 60s and 70s. Per the NIH, “today’s cannabis products can contain levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) as high as 90 percent, a staggering leap from the two to three

percent THC concentrations typical of the 1970s. This isn't just a nostalgic nod to simpler times; it's a public health alarm."

A May 4, 2023 Article published by the NIH found that long-term marijuana use increases the likelihood of mental health disorders, including schizophrenia. Daily users are five times more likely to develop psychosis than non-users. Marijuana-related emergency room visits have surged, particularly among adolescents and young adults, in states with legalized recreational use.

A 2023 study in the Cambridge publication Psychological Medicine (also reported in the Harvard Public Health journal on 12/12/2024) finds that the proportion of schizophrenia cases that may be attributed to cannabis has consistently increased over the past five decades. This echoed a previous 2021 JAMA Psychiatry study of seven million Danish citizens which found that their cases of schizophrenia have increased 3- to 4-fold during the past 2 decades.

Please let this next fact sink in: A 2022 Stanford Medicine article entitled, "Investigating psychiatric illnesses of mass shooters", found in analyzing 35 surviving mass shooters between 1982 and 2019, that 28 of them were likely suffering from an untreated psychiatric illness at the time of the shooting. I shudder to think how this bill could lead to an increase in this risk in our beloved Hawaii.

I therefore once again issue my appeal that each of you please OPPOSE HB1246. Please do not let your good names go down in history as those who pushed us down this slippery slope for good.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 1:03:34 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alton Uyema	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB 1246 for the following reasons:

1. Increased youth access and negative health impacts
2. Higher traffic risks from drug-impaired driving
3. Increased black market activity despite regulation

Mahalo for your consideration!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 1:54:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE this bill and all bills related to legalizing marijuana. The clear evidence from other "blue states" that doing so will be (and is) bad for our communities is overwhelming.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 2:38:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Chinen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

My name is Joy Chinen and I stand in opposition to HB1246 because my heart is for our keiki. I am a grandparent with 8 grandchildren. With recreational marijuana, it would be so easy for our keiki to get a hold of it. I feel that this is sending the wrong message to our keiki. We all know that the marijuana of today is more harmful than in the past. The States that have legalized marijuana are facing tremendous challenges with keiki who are not doing well in school, with businesses that are having a hard time keeping their employees, and with an increase in traffic accidents.

If the main reason for legalizing marijuana is for government income, that is not a good reason. **The consequences are too great.** Let's do what is good for our keiki. They are our future.

Please DO NOT LEGALIZE RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 4:18:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chadwick Roldan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose bill HB 1246

Marijuana is a gateway drug and with more access to marijuana will only hurt our keiki of Hawaii nei. Aole

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:04:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christine iwamoto	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I strongly oppose HB1246 because I have immediate family member that has 2 master's degrees in Secondary Education and considers himself incapable of working as a full time or part time teacher for the Department of Education. He is 38 years old and started using recreational marajuana at 18 years old. He has never smoked cigarettes or drank any alcohol before. Yet what began as smoking only on the weekend 1x a day soon increased to several times during the weekend and weekdays. He now currently smokes more than 8x a day, through a glass bong to help increase the potency. He does not have a medical reason to smoke so he buys it off the black market every month. He has developed what is called Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS) noted by an Emergency Doctor because he has too much marajuana in his body which causes severe nausea, vomiting, severe stomach pain, dehydration. The only way to remedy this is to stop smoking marajuana completely. The doctor also said this this diagnosis is very difficult to diagnosis because it mimics other health problems such as pancreatitis, flu, food poisoning, intestinal tract disease BUT all the medial tests from blood test, to CT scans, Endoscopy, Colonscopy will come back negative. So all the money spend on medical procedures shows nothing more than a clean bill of health except for adverse side effects from the excessive use of marajuana. I also have a cousin who is a medical pharmacist in Denver Colorado who has stated that CHS has risen exponentially in hospitals since the legalization of marajuana in their state. Prior to legalization they would see 1 case a month come through their ER in Denver Hospital. Today they see about 20 per week with teens and young adults being their primary patients of CHS. The hospital is now in financially struggling with increased cost that medical insurance does not want to pay for. Do we want this in hawaii? On July 31, 1843 King Kam III spoke the words *Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono* "**The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness**". This became our state motto in 1959, how are we valuing this motto by saying yes to this bill??? Would you feel the same way if someone gave your child or grandchild a joint to smoke marajuana because it is recreational and legal in our state? I STRONGLY oppose HB1246

Robert A. Cravalho
1515 Nuuanu Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96817
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808 265-3434

Hawaii State Legislature
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 146 – Legalization of Marijuana in Hawaii

Aloha!

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 146, which seeks to legalize recreational marijuana in the state of Hawaii. As a concerned business owner and resident of Hawaii, I believe that the legalization of marijuana will have detrimental effects on our communities, businesses, tourism industry, and—most importantly—our children.

We do not have to look far to see the negative consequences of marijuana legalization. Denver, Colorado, serves as a cautionary tale, where businesses have faced an increase in absenteeism, decreased productivity, and workplace safety concerns. The presence of marijuana dispensaries has contributed to higher crime rates, including drug-related offenses and impaired driving incidents. Hawaii cannot afford to follow this same path, especially given our unique reliance on tourism and the pristine image we present to visitors.

Tourism is the lifeblood of Hawaii's economy. Our visitors come here seeking paradise—beautiful beaches, fresh ocean air, and a relaxing escape from their everyday lives. If marijuana is legalized, we risk tarnishing that experience. Imagine families and visitors enjoying a beachside picnic, only to be overwhelmed by the pungent smell of marijuana from a neighboring group. This is not the image we want to project to the world. Instead of enhancing tourism, legalization could drive visitors away, much like how certain areas of Denver have become less desirable due to widespread public consumption.

Beyond tourism, we must consider the impact on our local families. Legalized marijuana will increase accessibility to children and teenagers, threatening their health and development. Studies have shown that marijuana use among adolescents can lead to cognitive decline, memory impairment, and an increased risk of mental health issues. Furthermore, the availability of marijuana-infused edibles presents a serious danger—many of these products look identical to candy or baked goods, making accidental ingestion by children a real and terrifying possibility. No parent should have to rush their child to the emergency room because they unknowingly consumed a marijuana-laced treat.

Hawaii has long prided itself on being a place of aloha, where families and communities thrive in a safe and welcoming environment. Legalizing marijuana threatens that environment. We should instead focus on policies that uplift our youth, support local businesses, and maintain the integrity of our tourism industry.

I respectfully urge you to vote against House Bill 146 and to consider the long-term consequences that this legislation could have on our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,


Robert A. Cravalho

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 5:17:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mamiko Carroll	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testifying in SUPPORT of H.B. 1246 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mamiko Carroll

Kaneohe

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:34:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Hayashida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony Opposing HB 1246 (Recreational Marijuana Legalization)

Chairperson, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1246, which seeks to among many things, legalize recreational marijuana in the State of Hawaii. I come before you today as a former family counselor and drug & alcohol counselor ,a current employer, and a concerned citizen deeply invested in the future of our state. I strongly oppose this bill due to its potential to harm our communities, families, and workforce, and I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of this legislation.

1. Negative Impact on Cognitive Abilities and Productivity

As a former counselor, I have witnessed firsthand the detrimental effects of marijuana use on individuals, particularly young adults. Research consistently shows that marijuana impairs cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and decision-making. These impairments are not temporary; prolonged use can lead to long-term deficits, especially in developing brains.

As an employer, I am deeply concerned about how recreational marijuana legalization will affect workplace productivity. Employees under the influence of marijuana are more likely to make errors, have slower reaction times, and exhibit reduced motivation. This not only jeopardizes their own safety but also the safety and efficiency of their coworkers. In a state like Hawaii, where industries such as tourism, healthcare, and construction are vital to our economy, we cannot afford to compromise the productivity and reliability of our workforce.

2. Destruction of Relationships and Family Dynamics

During my years as a family counselor, I worked with countless families torn apart by substance abuse. Marijuana use, even when perceived as "recreational," often leads to strained relationships, emotional detachment, and a breakdown in communication. It can exacerbate existing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, and create new conflicts within families.

Legalizing recreational marijuana sends a message that this substance is harmless, which is far from the truth. It normalizes use and increases accessibility, putting more families at risk of experiencing the pain and dysfunction that substance abuse brings. Hawaii’s families are already

facing enough challenges; we should not add to their burdens by legalizing a substance that has the potential to destroy relationships both within and outside the home.

3. The True Cost of Legalization

Proponents of HB 1246 often argue that legalizing recreational marijuana will generate revenue for the state. But at what cost? The financial gains from taxation will pale in comparison to the societal costs we will incur. Increased healthcare expenses, higher rates of addiction, greater strain on social services, and the potential rise in impaired driving accidents will far outweigh any short-term financial benefits.

Moreover, the message we send to our youth is deeply troubling. By legalizing recreational marijuana, we are essentially telling our children that drug use is acceptable, even desirable. This undermines years of prevention efforts and puts our future generations at risk.

4. What Is the Goal of Legalization?

I ask this committee: What is the true goal of legalizing recreational marijuana? If it is revenue, I urge you to consider the long-term costs to our communities and families. If it is personal freedom, I ask you to weigh that against the freedom of individuals to live in a safe, healthy, and productive society.

Hawaii is a unique and precious place, and its people deserve policies that protect their well-being and future. Legalizing recreational marijuana is not the answer. Instead, we should focus on strengthening our families, supporting mental health services, and investing in programs that promote healthy lifestyles and productive communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I strongly oppose HB 1246. The potential harms of recreational marijuana legalization far outweigh any perceived benefits. Let us not sacrifice the cognitive abilities, productivity, and relationships of our people for short-term gains. Let us prioritize the health and future of Hawaii's families and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Glen Hayashida

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 7:51:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Recreational cannabis use is legal in almost half the state. It brings in revenue while reducing burdens on local law enforcement. Our economy can get a much needed boost.

In Hawaii specifically, our county police departments do not seriously enforce current cannabis consumption laws. I urge this Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 9:14:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Eaton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice Chairs Poepoe and Kusch, and Members of the committees,

My name is Carolyn Eaton. I am a resident of Makiki and I strongly support this bill. By legalizing, regulating and taxing adult use of cannabis, the State can generate money for public health programs which address real problems like mental health care services, crisis intervention, supportive housing and youth education.

Diversion from the criminal justice and corrections pathways for adults who choose to patronize licensed sellers for their own recreational cannabis use will help ease the stress on our courts and lower the numbers of people we have been sentencing to terms behind bars.

In addition, this bill provides a pathway to record expungement for an individual's past marijuana convictions.

Mahalo for your efforts to put behind us the massive overuse of incarceration for adult use of cannabis. Let us spare our courts from having to adjudicate cases of adults who have done no harm. I appreciate this opportunity to express my opinion.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:37:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vernelle Oku	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please do not pass this bill. Do your research on the states that have legalized cannabis; it has not been good for the law abiding citizens of those states.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 10:41:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pablo Wegesend	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not really make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:55:34 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Esther Gefroh	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it May Concern:

I am again writing in opposition of the recreational marijuana bill that is proposed.

Our current society, especially here in Hawaii is turning away from following laws and now you want to reward those drug users by making it "Okay" to use drugs. Marijuana is not safe nor should be used by anyone, anywhere. Marijuana does alter the state of mind of the user and can adversely affect the unsuspecting public.

Please vote NO to this dangerous bill.

Sincerely yours,

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 8:56:57 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phil Robertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I think most jurors here in Hawaii do not believe Harry J. Anslinger's testimony to Congress in 1937 regarding cannabis. I think a huge majority believe the LaGuardia Report from 1944 by the New York Academy of Medicine, which refuted most of Anslinger's testimony.

I do not think American justice should incarcerate and give people criminal records based on lies.

Thank you,

Phil Robertson

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:15:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marla Berdon	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose the legalization of marijuana

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:41:46 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charis Logan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a mother and active community member, including weekly volunteerism in our community's elementary school, please do not pass this bill. I am very worried that this bill will increase the accessibility of marijuana to our children. Although I appreciate the attempt to add regulations to the adult use of cannabis, within regulations is where I fear the accessibility will increase for minors. Thank you!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 9:53:32 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Gouveia	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am against passage of this bill. It will increase youth access and have negative health impacts. it will result in increased traffic risks from drug-impaired driving.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 12:55:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha, my name is Shay Chan Hodges and I live in Haiku, Maui. I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. Mahalo for your time!"*

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 1:29:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Gifford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This measure is long overdue. If 24 other states can recognize the lack of harm posed by cannabis, especially in relation to other legalized recreational drugs, so can Hawai'i. It's obvious that the masses have already been comfortable enough evaluating the harm posed (and many benefits), long before legislatures. You can either legalize to regulate the industry and products and collect tax revenues and investments, or you can continue to perpetuate the failed War on Drugs, the further proliferation of the black market, and leave the community of users to face unnecessary harm.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 2:25:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Ventura	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to OPPOSE HB1246.

We have huge problems with homelessness on all islands. How will legalizing recreational marijuana help with this problem?

We have a huge problem with mental health issues. How will legalizing recreational marijuana help with this problem?

We have a huge problem with drug addictions. How will legalizing recreational marijuana help with this problem?

And we have too many traffic deaths. How will legalizing recreational marijuana help with this problem?

This bill is being touted as a way to raise money. Other states have tried this and found out that the taxes raised through the sale of marijuana do not come close to covering the cost of the damage to individuals and families. And if an impaired driver kills even one person on our highways, there is no amount of money to justify that!

I urge you to vote NO on HB1246. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 2:54:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Penn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rep. Kristin Kahaloa and Vice Chair Rep. Matthias Kusch,

My name is Barbara Penn and I reside on the Island of Kauai. I am testifying as a kupuna who would like to see marijuana legalized in the State of Hawaii. Marijuana is a much more safe and natural treatment for a variety of common ailments related to advancing years, compared to prescription pain medications. The aches and pains due to arthritis is a very common complaint among seniors, myself included. This can be addressed with a small amount of CBD cream which is derived from the marijuana plant. This bill will allow more people to obtain this essential product without being afraid of the legal consequences associated with cultivation and distribution. I urge you to please SUPPORT this bill.

Mahalo,

Barbara Penn

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 3:50:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wai H. Low	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives:

This herb is used in Asia for many centuries to treat pain and other disorders and is part of Chinese herbal medicine. Passing this bill will lower dependency on opioids. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 4:56:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mandy Chang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose HB 1246. In recent years I've heard from families living in State's where marijuana has become legal and none of them have had a kind word to say for the way it has impacted their communities. They've seen an increase in crime as well as a rise in companies of all types needing to fill employment openings without success. In these States the housing market has continued to climb - pricing families out of what should be reasonably affordable homes. These families have also felt increasingly unsafe as the feel of neighborhoods change. We live in a State that cannot afford to continue to move in a direction that is unsafe and unfriendly for families abilities to thrive. On Oahu our crime has skyrocketed and we are 400 police officers short - we cannot afford to invite more crime, more illegal activity and more danger to our island. The streets of Kapolei look like a homeless shelter and our parks have mentally ill individuals and those affected by drugs yelling and wandering around scaring our keiki - and our adults. It is no longer possible for the majority of working class families to afford even a starter home on Oahu. Our roads would also become more dangerous with the addition of those who would be driving under the influence of marijuana. Let's not continue down a path leading to more brokenness and loss of Aloha. I strongly urge you to vote NO on HB 1246.

Blessings,

Amanda Chang of Makakilo

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 5:27:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 6:34:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Duffy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legalizing the personal adult use of cannabis, as proposed in this bill, poses serious risks to public health and safety that outweigh any perceived benefits. Allowing possession of up to one ounce—enough to produce approximately 112 joints—and up to two pounds within a private residence significantly increases the potential for misuse, diversion, and illegal distribution, particularly to minors. Despite the bill’s measures to prevent marijuana from reaching our keiki (children), experts consistently warn that youth access tends to rise following legalization. The bill’s lenient penalties, such as classifying the sale of marijuana to a minor as only a misdemeanor, fail to serve as an adequate deterrent and downplay the seriousness of exposing young people to this psychoactive substance. Moreover, marijuana remains a Schedule I controlled substance under federal law, and legalizing it at the state level creates a dangerous conflict with federal regulations, potentially undermining respect for the rule of law. The legislature should prioritize the health and well-being of our communities over the commercialization of a substance with well-documented risks.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 6:37:24 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chanara Casey Richmond	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I live in HD 42 and I oppose bill 1246. CANNIBUS IS NOT HARMLESS. Chanara Casey Richmond

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 10:50:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Chinen	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Dear Chairs and Committee members,

Please take strong consideration in opposing this bill. It will change the foundation of the families of Hawaii should this be legitimized.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:37:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiana Flores	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the legalization of recreational cannabis.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:41:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kyle Shimabukuro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill as I feel it will be harmful to our community.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:24:33 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ken Kondo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a recovering drug addicted that is blessed with a successful financial planning practice. Please kill bill HB 1246.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 11:37:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lucy Parkin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators and Chairperson:

I strongly oppose this bill as I do not support the legalization of recreational marijuana. I am deeply concerned for our youth that will entice and encourage them to be exposed and experience such products. It will also affect our families systematically opening doors to other problematic unwanted issues.

Mahalo,

Lucy Parkin

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 12:57:09 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Gonce	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong Support

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 1:43:55 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joyce Shimabukuro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB1246.

i am a mother and grandmother; I do not want my loved ones to be influenced by cannabis or be effected by anyone under the influence of cannabis. For the sake of the citizens of Hawai'i stop this bill from passing.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 2:35:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doug Klunder	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

My name is Doug Klunder, and I'm testifying in support of HB 1246, a bill to legalize and regulate adult use of cannabis. Although I have been a resident of Hawaii (in Kahaluu) for over three years, prior to that I lived in Washington State for many years. I have seen first-hand the benefits of cannabis legalization and regulation, as Washington was one of the first states to do so, back in 2012.

Decades of experience have shown that cannabis prohibition does not work. It does not make our communities safer, nor does it actually prevent people from using cannabis. Anybody living in our society is well aware that cannabis is easily available on the black market, and is widely used. Rather than eliminating trade in cannabis, all prohibition has done is turn that trade into a Wild West proposition, with no protections for consumers, making them extremely vulnerable to unscrupulous criminals who dominate the trade. Legalization and regulation will turn that trade into a safe business, where consumers can accurately know what product they're getting--not all cannabis is the same--and how to safely use it. It also **increases** public safety--rather than driving the trade to shady locations and shady characters, consumers will be able to safely shop in aboveboard businesses just as they do for every other product, without fears of violence if a "deal goes bad," or dealers using violence against competitors.

Furthermore, there is no dispute that enforcement of the current law has disproportionate effects on communities of color, and wastes taxpayer dollars on unnecessary incarceration--in already overcrowded jails and prisons. Rather than the waste of taxpayer money on ineffective enforcement of prohibition of cannabis, we can instead turn the cannabis industry into a source of revenue for Hawaii government--enabling programs that **actually** increase public health and safety, including education and support of social services.

Thank you for your consideration of this valuable legislation!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 4:45:49 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Fairchild	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They waste taxpayer dollars, perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system, and lock people up unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 6:38:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doreen Morimoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please protect our beautiful state and keikis.

I oppose legalizing recreational marijuana.

It's a harmful drug, that's addictive, and a gateway to more dangerous drugs. Similar to cigarette smoking, it can lead to cancer, respiratory illness, heart attacks, and other medical conditions.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 6:59:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leonard Suan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I would like to submit this written testimony in opposition of House Bill 1246. As a parent and teacher in our public schools I feel that the passage of this bill would be of great detriment to the young people of Hawaii and general population as a whole.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:12:50 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandra Suan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I humbly oppose HB1246. I believe the legalization of recreational marijuana will be detrimental to our children and teenagers. Studies show it can lower their IQ levels and increase psychosis as the THC levels have increased in marijuana. The average THC content in dried cannabis has increased from around 3% in the 1980s to around 15% today. Some strains can have an average as high as 30% THC.

It can also lead to increased crime rates as witnessed by Colorado's increase in crime following marijuana legalization in their state.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:45:16 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jean'ne Nicole Marie Robertson-Leong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Jean'ne Nicole Marie Robertson-Leong

P.O Box 1243

Aiea, HI 96701

nicolerobertsonleong@icloud.com

808.670.0455

February 2, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1246

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1246 and to emphasize the crucial role nurses play as public health professionals. As a nurse practitioner, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact nurses have on individual health outcomes and community well-being. This bill represents an important step toward recognizing and enhancing the contributions of nurses to the health and safety of our state's residents.

Nurses are more than just caregivers in clinical settings; they are essential public health professionals who are deeply involved in health promotion, disease prevention, and policy advocacy. From providing vital care in hospitals to educating communities on chronic disease management, nurses are on the frontlines of addressing the social determinants of health. We are trained to not only provide direct patient care but also to understand and mitigate health disparities, manage public health crises, and promote equitable access to healthcare resources.

Supporting HB1246 will provide nurses with the resources and authority to further contribute to public health initiatives, ultimately strengthening our healthcare system and improving the health of our communities. Nurses have the expertise to lead in areas such as immunization campaigns, maternal health, mental health services, and disaster preparedness, and it is critical that our role be recognized as integral to public health planning and policy development.

I urge you to consider the value of nursing professionals as central to improving public health outcomes and to support HB1246 as a means of further empowering nurses in their vital role.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I am confident that your support will result in lasting positive change for both healthcare professionals and the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Jean'ne N. M Robertson-Leong MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Family Nurse Practitioner

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 7:54:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bert Roy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose bill HB1246

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:32:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cori	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I think criminalizing marijuana is an incredibly outdated practice. No one should be in jail for this anymore. As someone with multiple sclerosis, marijuana has also helped me immensely to manage my condition.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 8:49:00 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gail J Lile	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I strongly oppose this Bill to legalize Marijuana in Hawaii!

Simply stated, we already have enough people breaking the law and smoking weed now in public and in their homes, with neighbors having to tolerate the smell and 2nd hand smoke. Just imagine how much that will increase when it's legal.

You only think about the tax money, but money isn't everything. This Bill will create a degradation of morals and crime in the communities of these Islands. I don't want my family seeing people blatantly smoking weed on the street.

Mahalo,

Gail J. Lile

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:45:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ada Akimoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ada, and I am reaching out to you, honorable Representatives for the first time in my life because I am a mother and nana who is deeply concerned about the future of our children and our children's children. I am opposed to HB 1246 because I strongly feel that the outcome of its passage will be so much more detrimental to the health and welfare of Hawai'i than the intended benefit of generating more State funds. I have been to Oregon many times and witnessed the effects of recreational marijuana use. Oregon's lawmakers did not do their homework to find out how the more potent marijuana of today cause more people to be more prone to drug addition. Subsequently, they legalized drugs. Now downtown Portland looks like a police state with many stores posting armed guards at the door and there are roaming security in all public places. Drug addicts are all over and do drugs on the light rail that goes through the city. I felt safer in Istanbul, Turkey than in Portland! Portland used to be a beautiful city and now it is occupied by so many homeless and drug addicted people. Yes, Hawai'i has homeless and drug addicts, but not to the extent as Portland. I do not want to see anywhere in Hawai'i resemble what I witnessed in Portland. Thank you for allowing me to voice my real concern for our families and generations to come.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:52:38 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loraine Cross	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I kindly request that you oppose HB1246. I have first hand experience with many people who have used marijuana and it wreaked havoc in their lives and those around them. Other drugs and alcohol always accompanied the use of marijuana. It's consumption often lead to other illegal activities. Legalization would contribute to many more serious issues to our local society, which would become more costly and damaging. Please find alternative legal ways to create revenue for our beloved Aloha state and her people. It is hypocritical and insane to create new traffic offenses related to the consumption and possession of marijuana if it is legalized. Please do not jeopardize the public's safety with the legalization of marijuana which would cause marijuana users to think it is safe to drive while under the influence of this gateway drug. We will monitor and remember how you vote on this issue. Thank you for your desire to serve the people with integrity, as the people have trusted you to work in their best interest for a safer, better and more legally prosperous Aloha state. Please steward your position wisely, as you are making decisions for the lives of others who have placed their trust in your integrity to do the right thing for the people. We will remember how you vote. Ua Mao Ke Ea O Ka Aina I Ka Pono. Mahalo for making the right decision.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 9:58:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Veray	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I most strongly disapprove of this bill. It will definitely negatively impact our community. Once cannabis is legalized, it will cause grave damage to our young with even more access to this drug and other eatibles.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/2/2025 10:28:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvie Madison	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I write in **strong opposition** to HB1246, which seeks to legalize adult-use cannabis and expand government bureaucracy at the expense of public health and safety. While supporters claim that this bill will regulate the industry and generate revenue, the real impact of marijuana legalization in other states tells a very different story—one of **increased homelessness, persistent black market sales, and long-term social consequences that Hawai‘i cannot afford to ignore.**

Legalization Fuels Homelessness and Substance Dependency

States like California, Oregon, and Colorado saw **homeless populations rise after marijuana legalization**, often correlating with increased substance dependency and mental health crises (HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 2023). In California, homelessness increased **by nearly 50% since legalization in 2016** (California Policy Lab, 2022), with officials citing **drug use as a key factor** in long-term street homelessness.

As **someone who has personally overcome addiction**, I know firsthand that **marijuana was my gateway drug**, and this reality should not be dismissed. It is **already legal for medical use**, meaning those who need it for health reasons have access. Expanding it further only **normalizes** recreational drug use and leads more people toward dependency.

A Failed Economic Argument

Supporters claim legalization will generate revenue, yet in California, the **black market still accounts for over 60% of cannabis sales, undercutting tax revenues and fueling organized crime** (Los Angeles Times, 2022). Law enforcement **continues to raid large-scale illegal grow operations**, many linked to cartels, despite years of regulation.

Marijuana legalization also **carries economic burdens—ER visits for cannabis-related issues surged** in legal states, with California reporting a **65% increase in cannabis-related medical emergencies** (California Department of Public Health, 2022). Increased impaired driving incidents and workplace issues related to drug use **further offset any promised financial benefits.**

Public Health and Leadership Matters

Effective leadership should prioritize policies that promote true health and well-being. **It is important that those advocating for such measures also reflect the values of responsible governance and public health.** If we are serious about improving public health, **we should focus on strengthening families, improving economic opportunities, and supporting real wellness—not creating policies that encourage reliance on substances.**

Conclusion

Hawai‘i must decide what kind of future it wants. **Do we follow the failed policies of other states, normalizing drug use, increasing homelessness, and burdening our healthcare system? Or do we protect our communities and invest in policies that uplift rather than weaken?**

HB1246 **does not** support family values, improve public health, or strengthen our economy. **I urge the legislature to reject this bill** and focus on solutions that promote a **stronger, healthier, and safer Hawai‘i.**

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvie Madison
Hawai‘i Resident

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:15:58 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Bence	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs, Vice Chairs and Comittee members,

Cannabis has saved my life several times on record, as a medical patient and a generational diversified organic farmer from Kula and was on the hemp task force I love this plant and want it to be legal for all adults; however, as currently written this bill will do more harm than good. This bill needs a lot of work to be something that could help local farmers, patients and consumers.

The major problem with this bill is it treats what is still, unfortunately, a federally illegal substance, adult use cannabis, with federally legal hemp and potentially legal and currently accepted medical cannabis. The new office would cause added buracratc and cost hurdles that would not be able to be covered by the fees. The state waited far to long and now the national price of cannabis has plummeted and the bill acts as if the current price could justify such stringent regulation.

The best way to legalize cannabis would be to set up a much simpler system with an office that has equal control from the stakeholders and not exclusively controlled by the governor. Make the social equity for those who have lived here at least 21 years and have been medicincial patients and/or hemp farmers in district H2. These licenses should pay no fees, fines or taxes beyond state income and GET with no cost testing and no plant or quantity limits or tracking beyond that required by usda. The incredibly low price of the imported California cannabis at \$200-\$300 lb is only possible for Hawai'i farmers to compete with if we have a far simpler bill for a far more simple program that focuses on quality and the ability to legally export that world class produce. The goal of the bill of eliminating the illicit and import market will only be achieved if we become the only state to properly implement an adult use program to give social equity to all qualified local patients and farmers who made the adult use possible. Limitations on licensing won't work, an efficient market will naturally find equilibrium. If the bill and the office are made far simpler, more realistic in light of curent market prices it could be redrafted to help many severely disabled patients, farmers and consumers.

Patients that need cannabis to survive should not be faced with any additional restrictions and should be allowed to each grow at least the federal threshold of 99 plants and sell any extra at sanctioned farmers markets.

The state should focus on education and exploration of potential federally legal medical cannabis exports under (Public Law No: 117-215 (12/02/2022) and high THCa non synthetic hemp under the farmbill to people over 21 years of age. The local industrial uses of hempcrete will be a byproduct of a profitable hemp export market as growing for industrial purposes alone will not be profitable in Hawai'i without the ability to compete with other states in the cannabinoid markets.

Based on the first 50 pages have the following notes:

HR 1246

page 3-4

Clarify the problem is from imported hemp only and allowing the local farmers to compete with the highest non synthetic thc as other states with the lowest tax and regulation cost barriers to encourage the state can compete in the export as well as the local hemp market in all federally legal markets.

Page 7 D and E

Clarifying the geographical area includes everything outside Honolulu city at the house district 1 and that all country areas are equal.

That E won't be prosecuted and can include all patients and does not require a charge or conviction.

That D and E are social equity categories providing, that as Hawai'i was an early leader in medicinal cannabis and hemp both farmers are also given a perpetual legacy social equity protections for growing, sales and consumption. (This would help severely disabled individuals that need cannabis to survive and the most regulated hemp farmers in the nation recognized for their sacrifices and special needs to remain alive and in business)

Page 8 section 2 The hemp and social equity licenses also granted perpetual automatic exemption of this and any future cannabis specific state tax. (Only way to compete with illicit and imported markets is to keep taxes down for low income locals to compete effectively, increasing safety)

Page 8 section 3

“ Debilitating, medical conditions” those who are Severely disabled medical patients shall allowed to continue the use their cannabis medicine, as many pharmaceutical labels state: “May impair don't drive or use heavy machinery until you know how your body reacts to this medication.” (Research has shown that not only do experienced users drive safely when consuming large quantities of cannabis, many severely disabled patients require cannabis to survive and without the legal protections and driving they would not survive. Should be a special category for severely disabled patients with extensive experience)

Page 8 section 7

Ensure patients, farmers and consumers are able to make the majority decision as the majority stakeholders to help that the new state office does not veer into bureaucratic over regulation and taxation entity that would counteract the purported reason for the law and encourage compliance by limiting barriers to legal activity.

Page 9 add section 9

Research and support the potential export opportunities of hemp and medicinal cannabis to other states and nations under the current federal framework of the medicinal, marijuana and cannabinoid research expansion act, the current and any future Farm Bill or any other federally legal opportunities.

Page 9 (2)

This independent board is under control of the patients, farmers and consumers who are the stakeholders of the office to encourage participation, cooperation and confidence in the office and ensure it does not become a barrier that defeats the purpose of the bill by making the illicit market more attractive.

Page 11

End sentence with a period after condition. (the amount of cannabis needed by a patient and vary dramatically based on the individuals conditions. At least for the severely disabled patient group there shall be no limit on quantity)

Page 21 add a section 3:

Hemp microgreen as defined under USDA by development of alternative sampling protocols, by the hemp coordinator or their designee. The microgreens must follow the FDA guidance on hemp microgreens including label requirements and any state or federal regulations which apply to microgreen food safety. The office will support this research as another local food opportunity and help with market development.

Add section 4:

The office will encourage research with UH and K-State for the feeding and sale of hemp feed livestock products.

Page 27 either change the second one or add a third one that says A medical patient with a debilitating medical condition that requires cannabis to survive and has been growing for a minimum of twenty one years in the state.

Add a fourth one a USDA registered hemp farmer who has lived in the state for a minimum of twenty one years and has had a USDA hemp license prior to 2024

Page 32 section B

Replace the legislature and governor with a independent board consisting of medicinal, cannabis, patients, hemp farmers, consumers, legacy growers from the illicit market and law enforcement and one representative from the legislature and one from the governors this way the majority stakeholders have the majority role in keeping the office on track to outcompete the illicit and import markets.

Page 34 section 8

Shouldn't have the power to set up or even limit of issuing licenses the system will not work as designed with limited licenses. It needs to be written in bill that no limit of licenses, excessive fees, taxes or regulations that would encourage the continued proliferation of the illicit and import markets.

Page 35 section 13

Strike this section as no way state will be able to perform this research and limiting licensing will never work if try to reduce illicit and imports. The market will find equilibrium.

Section 16

Reduce the fees cannabis is no longer a cash cow good quality hand trimmed California and Michigan cannabis sells from state legal for \$300 a pound over taxation and fees cause the illicit and import markets to thrive.

Page 45-46 section 13

Cost of escrow when insurance isn't available for federally illegal cannabis can be another example of over regulation and high costs that are no longer feasible with current cannabis profit margins.

Page 50 A-16 rename to cannabis regulation and education and slim down the size and scope of this office significantly as cannabis is no longer profitable enough to support such a large purview and the illicit and import markets would remain far more appealing negating the goal of increasing taxes and public health.

Mahalo

Robert Lawrence Bence

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:22:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Manago	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha,

Mahalo to our leaders for your dedication to Hawaii and its people. Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

My name is Nicholas Manago, born and raised on Oahu. With deep love for our home, **I OPPOSE HB1246.**

Hawaii is built on **ohana** and **aloha**—caring for each other and protecting future generations. While I understand the intent behind this bill, the risks far outweigh the benefits. Increased access has been linked to **higher youth usage, cognitive decline, addiction, and mental health struggles**—harmful, lifelong consequences. These are not just statistics; these are real impacts on the lives of our keiki, our families, and the generations yet to come.

Beyond family impact, **public safety and workplace responsibility** are at stake. Legalization has been associated with **increased impaired driving incidents**, and industries like **construction and healthcare** cannot afford the risks. Would we feel safe knowing a surgeon or heavy equipment operator was under the influence?

This is not about opposition—it’s about protecting ours families. I urge you to consider the long-term impact and stand for the well-being of our keiki, families, and future generations.

Mahalo for your time and leadership.

With aloha,
Nick Manago

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:29:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Miriama Vakalalabure	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I completely oppose this bill! The youth and children of Hawaii, especially in high risk areas, are already being affected by cannabis. Why would you, in good conscience, allow such a bill to pass that would affect their lives even more. For the sake of money, you would risk our future? People put their trust in you as law makers to pass laws that would be beneficial to Hawaii as a whole. This sounds like a bill that would benefit a minority financially while majority would have to pay for the consequences of your actions. Do what's best for Hawaii! Be the leaders you were placed there to be. Remember, at the end of the day, God is in control. God can remove you from your position if you are using it to pass laws that will hurt, more than help, the people of Hawaii. This bill needs to be thrown out, along with all these drug dealers and business men who are trying to push it into Hawaii Law!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:47:14 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Tamosiunas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1246 and believe It would generate tens of millions of dollars to serve Hawai'i residents. A scholarship program could be created for Highschool Graduates to attend any University in Hawaii for free as long as the students maintain a 3.0 average or higher. Mahalo.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:16:06 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
dakin retzlaff	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Let's join the rest of the western mainland in legalizing it finally please. Mahalo

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:34:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tom Ricks	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Today's Marijuana is engineered to have an extreme high potency of THC with devastating effects, dumbing down our people, especially for our students and causing impairment, dangerous driving conditions and emotional destructive effects.

Legislators are looking at the tax benefit but the cost to our society in crime, economics and personal cost to our people will be devastating and will significantly cost more for the people than the profits for the government.

Besides the health and moral bad effects of the legalization, the bill contains a provision that a person can go to work high/impaired and the employer has to accept it.

but it is horrible, it will setup irreversible negative impacts to our islands, communities, children and our economy. One of the major concerns, is that the cartels are just waiting for marijuana to be legal in Hawaii for them to come into the State to setup shop. This law will have a devastating long term effect on Hawaii.

We will see an increase in human trafficking, harder drugs and violence in our state. HPD cannot keep up with crime now. This will also tarnish the reputation of the people of Hawaii making us all look like fools.

What the bill is not addressing is the social and economic cost to the society by increased medical intervention, depression in the users, emotional complications, deaths and destroyed lives by its usage.

This is classic enrichment of the government establishment at the cost of we the people. Pakalolo is a fool's drug and makes fools of everyone. The people of Hawaii are not fools but good people who want life, liberty and unfinged pursuit of happiness for their children and communities. NO to drugged out people! We have seen the destruction of Marijuana in the 60s and 70s and medical research has shown severe negative effects on people. No!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:07:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
donn viviani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am a Kailua resident. Please pass this bill and legalize cannabis, so it can be controlled like any other substance that has both benefits and risks and there is significant public demand for. Taking enforcement out of the criminal regime and into the civil will allow more efficient use of Hawaii's law enforcement resources. Mahalo

Donn Viviani

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:17:24 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Texeira	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill because I believe mariuana is a gateway drug to other stronger and more dangeraius consequences for our society.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:30:02 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zachary Bonzell	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

2/3/2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to HB1246 and all efforts to legalize and commercialize cannabis in the State of Hawai‘i. This is my personal opinion as a private citizen, informed by my work as a psychiatrist in training in Honolulu, and by my review of the biomedical literature.

To begin, cannabis is not the same drug it was even some years ago. Over the past 50 years, the concentration of THC – the main psychoactive substance in cannabis – has increased approximately 10x. This potency is what drives its danger, particularly its effects on anxiety, insomnia, depression, and psychosis.

When regulations on cannabis are relaxed, overall use increases, and not just among those over the age of 21. Studies have found that less restrictive cannabis policy environments are associated with increased past month use among both adults and youth (Pessar et al. 2024).

This spillover effect of use among youth is particularly troubling. Adolescent onset of cannabis use is associated with more neurocognitive deficits compared to those who initiate use in adulthood (Mashhoon et al. 2019). An analysis of four large epidemiologic trials found that cannabis use during adolescent is associated with reductions in the odds of high school completion and degree attainment in a dose-dependent manner (Silins et al. 2014). Cannabis consumption in adolescence is associated with increased risk of development of major depression in young adulthood, and suicidality, especially suicidal ideation (Gobbi et al. 2019). This starts with legalization: Statistics show a 9-14% greater risk for suicide-related mortality in 14- to 16-year-old youth living in states where recreational marijuana is legalized (Hammond et al. 2024). Cannabis also creates an increased risk of traffic accidents, already a major issue in

Hawai‘i: in one study, cannabis use led to significant impairments on complex and novel driving-related tasks, as well as perceived driving safety and ability for up to 5 hours after use (Ogourtsova et al. 2018).

When cannabis is sold in stores, it is consumed in more ways. Cannabis legalization has been associated with increased use of alternative methods of consumptions (e.g. vapes, edibles) which are known to contain higher THC concentrations (Borodovsky et al. 2017). Importantly, the youth use of cannabis concentrates is associated with greater progression to long-term cannabis use (Barrington-Trimis et al. 2020). Thus, as cannabis regulations are relaxed, its use becomes heavier, as well as more chronic.

One of the most important consequences of this use is the development of cannabis-induced psychosis. Studies have demonstrated this association repeatedly. For instance, in Colorado, there has been observed a positive association between the number of cannabis dispensaries and rates of emergency department visits for psychosis in (Wang et al. 2022). Adolescent cannabis exposure predicts up to a twofold increase in risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia in adulthood (Levine et al. 2017). This association is highly variable based on underlying genetic risk – something nobody learns of until it is too late. For the genetic category corresponding to the bottom fifth of those at risk, cannabis use increases the odds of psychosis by 7%. For those genetically predisposed to be in the highest fifth, cannabis use increases the odds of psychosis by 67%. These numbers are based on a UK Biobank of over 100,000 individuals (Wainberg et al. 2021). In an even larger dataset, rates of schizophrenia attributable to cannabis have increased 3-4x over the past 20 years among 7 million people in Denmark. This is thought to be due to increases in THC potency over that period (Hjorthoj et al. 2021).

These numbers may seem like impersonal statistics, but I can assure you based on my experiences in the hospital and clinic that the damage done to human lives is all too real. I have observed and treated numerous Hawaiian citizens – patients and their families – whose lives have been disrupted by cannabis use. My concern is that this danger will skyrocket if cannabis is legalized and commercialized in our state. I urge you to hear this testimony as a warning of a more dangerous future, particularly for keiki.

Sincerely,

Zachary Bonzell, MD

Psychiatry Resident, PGY-3, University of Hawai‘i Residency Programs

Interim President, Hawai'i Psychiatric Medical Association

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:43:41 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Arima	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To me this is a common sense decision to not allow recreational marijuana to be legal.

What message is that sending to our young people?

Have you heard the testimonies of police officers who have to deal with marijuana users on the road?

Have you studied other states who have legalized this?

I think you will find that it just makes common sense to not legalize recreational marijuana if we want our people to be **happy, healthy, and safe!**

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:45:08 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Klemme	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired RN of 42 years I am adamantly opposed to legalization of Marijuana. Our society does not need another legal form of mind altering substance! Patients can obtain medically prescribed Marijuana to help control their symptoms. Instead of promoting another "drug" please promote policies that strengthen our society, prioritize health, well-being, strengthen families, solve homelessness and not "normalize" drug use. Please vote NO on HB1246.

Aloha Chair David Tarnes, Chair Kristin Kahaloa, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, and Vice Chair Matthias,

My name is Alexis Muller, and I am public health educator, cannabinoid educator, cannabis patient, and community advocate. I testify today in **strong support of HB1246**, which takes a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to cannabis regulation, prioritizing public health, youth protection, and community investment.

The current approach to cannabis has not achieved its intended goals. HB1246 provides a better path forward—one that establishes clear regulations, safeguards our youth, and reinvests in our communities.

I would like to recommend some amendments to further strength HB1246:

- **Incorporate research responsibilities.** The cannabis commission of Massachusetts has written into legislation a research branch that informs evidence-based policy decisions and add to the scientific literature. Please see Massachusetts legislation for language <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXV/Chapter94G/Section17> <https://masscannabiscontrol.com/research/>
- **Develop a workforce training and education program** to provide essential skills needed for careers in the cannabis industry. This will create economic opportunities, strengthen the industry's longevity, and ensure a well-trained workforce. Education should also include the therapeutic value of cannabis, safe and responsible use, and harm reduction strategies to promote public health and safety.
- **Allocate tax revenue to schools**, enabling them to implement farm-to-table programs. Schools can grow food for lunch services, educate students on regenerative farming, and sell produce at farmers' markets.
- **Support local farmers** by directing tax revenue to those producing both food and cannabis medicine. This would improve their access to healthcare and supply locally grown food for school meals. Strengthening our agriculture community across the state.
- **Ensure Native Hawaiian representation** by designating a percentage of advisory board seats to Native Hawaiians and including representatives from all islands.
- **Establishing consumption lounges** would provide a safe, controlled environment for both patients and visitors. These spaces would generate tax revenue, stimulate local economic development, and create jobs—including opportunities for ride-share services and lounge operations.

These additions will strengthen HB1246 by prioritizing community well-being, sustainability, and economic equity.

What Hb1246 will bring to the state:

Regulation Helps Prevent Underage Access

Evidence from other states shows that regulated cannabis markets do not increase teen use. In fact, studies indicate that oversight and legal frameworks contribute to reductions in youth consumption.

- The University of Michigan’s Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey reports declines in high school cannabis use following legalization.
- In 19 of 21 states with pre- and post-legalization data, government studies show reductions in teen use.
- Nationwide, CDC surveys have tracked declines in high school cannabis use from 2011 to 2023.

A key reason for this trend is that regulated businesses check IDs—while unregulated sources do not. Licensed retailers must follow strict age verification procedures, ensuring that cannabis is only accessible to adults 21 and older.

2. Regulation Ensures Product Safety

Without oversight, cannabis products may contain pesticides, heavy metals, mold, or other contaminants. HB1246 ensures that all cannabis sold in Hawai‘i will be:

- Tested for quality and safety.
- Labeled with accurate potency information and clear usage guidelines.
- Packaged responsibly, including child-resistant containers to prevent accidental ingestion.

By establishing safety standards, we can better protect consumers and promote responsible use.

3. Investing in Youth and Community Programs

HB1246 will generate new tax revenue to support initiatives that directly benefit Hawai‘i’s young people and underserved communities, including:

- Social Equity Grants to help historically impacted groups.
- Public Health and Education Grants for:
 - Child care and after-school programs.
 - Youth centers and mentorship initiatives.
 - Mental health and substance prevention services.

These investments will foster stronger, healthier communities for future generations.

4. Economic Growth Through Tourism

Hawai'i's visitor industry continues to evolve, and cannabis legalization presents an opportunity to expand and diversify our economy. In 2023, Hawai'i welcomed 9.5 million visitors, with 76% arriving from U.S. states where cannabis is already legal.

Aligning Hawai'i's policies with major visitor markets can:

- Attract responsible travelers who are accustomed to regulated cannabis.
- Broaden tourism's reach, reducing reliance on any single visitor market.
- Support local businesses and agriculture, creating new economic opportunities.

Other states have successfully integrated cannabis regulation into their tourism industries, and Hawai'i has the chance to shape a model that reflects our values and priorities.

5. Addressing Past Harms and Building a Fair System

Cannabis-related policies have disproportionately affected Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other communities of color. HB1246 provides a framework for:

- Expunging past cannabis convictions, offering a fresh start to affected individuals.
- Prioritizing industry access for Native Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Islander entrepreneurs.
- Reinvesting tax revenue into housing, healthcare, and education for communities most impacted by past enforcement policies.

A Balanced, Responsible Approach

HB1246 is not about encouraging cannabis use—it's about establishing thoughtful oversight and ensuring community benefits. A well-regulated system will allow Hawai'i to:

- Strengthen youth protections through clear age restrictions and compliance checks.
- Ensure product safety through quality testing and labeling.
- Direct resources to community programs that uplift keiki and families.
- Support economic opportunities aligned with Hawai'i's values and visitor industry.

This is our opportunity to transition from an outdated approach to one that prioritizes health, safety, and equity. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Alexis Muller

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:02:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joy Shimizu	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill.

Thank you for holding a hearing to allow the public's voice to be heard.

We can see from other states that have legalized the use of marijuana the negative impacts it has. Testimony heard from numerous leaders in our community must be considered and taken seriously. Please vote NO on this bill.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:16:59 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Pullman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm a lawyer from California who moved to Hawaii five years ago to serve as a public defender. I am also a 54 yr. old adult user of cannabis. After being normalized to the legal status of cannabis in CA, I feel like I'm being treated like a child in Hawaii, subject to search, confiscation, and fining. Hawaii is the only "blue state" in the US to prohibit the adult use of cannabis. Red states, Montana, Alaska, Arizona, and Missouri join all blue states in ending the senseless criminalization of adults who use cannabis, a far safer drug than legal alcohol or tobacco.

The measly 3 grams that are decriminalized in Hawaii is less than the standard quantity sold, so that a normal purchaser is already above that limit. Decriminalization still subjects the user to search, seizure, and fining. Such enlightened states as Mississippi and Nebraska allow for 30 grams. Hawaii is behind the times.

In my work as a public defender, I see how this tragedy unfolds, wreaking havoc on the lives of the Hawaiian people, native and otherwise. Just the other day a defendant was sentenced to 30 days in jail for possession of the marijuana equivalent of a pack of cigarettes. This is shocking and egregious. Legalization of Cannabis in Hawaii is long overdue. Please end the tragedy of cannabis prohibition in Hawaii once and for all.

Testimony 2025 Adult Use Cannabis Bill

Aloha Chairs, and members of the committees,

BIO: My name is Mark T. Rothstein, M.D. I have been a licensed physician in Hawaii since May 2004 (License No. MD-11535) and in Ohio since October 1974 (License No. 35.037876) with 37 years of “on the ground” clinical experience in Appalachia Ohio as a board-certified family physician. I was also a physician commissioned officer in the U.S. Public Health Service serving in Appalachia for 3 years, Vinton County Coroner (Ohio) for 8 years, Director of O’Bleness Hospital Wound Center, the Senior Vice President of OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital and Executive Director of a large multispecialty physician group for 7 years. I am the Medical Director of Green Aloha Ltd., one of the existing eight legal medical cannabis license holders and sole licensee for Kauai. I have completed over 53 hours of approved American Academy of Family Medicine Continuing Medical Education Hours (CME) specifically on medical cannabis topics. I am a strong supporter of HB 1246.

INTRO: I will leave to others to discuss the benefits to Hawaii regarding the potential generation of future tax revenues this bill could likely produce (estimated “tax revenues from \$34-53 million dollar “¹ to \$82 million dollars with an additional 3375 new jobs²). In addition, HB 1246 gives the Attorney General more tools to curtail the sale of illegal cannabis and other cannabis-like intoxicating drugs.

The most common complaints that my adult patients have complained about are pain, anxiety, sleep issues, and the general ailments of aging. They come seeking prescription medications as they have already found insufficient efficacy from over-the-counter drugs. Many have tried cannabis with good results but have been averse to go through the illegal illicit market and many are reluctant to go through the expensive and burdensome process of enrolling in the relatively new medical cannabis program. Some just don’t want to be “registered by the government” or are afraid it might interfere with their “right to own a gun”! Instead of taking strong prescription drugs, many with significant side effects, HB 1246 would provide an easy avenue for our adults to obtain safe, tested and labeled cannabis for these ailments.

For many years supporters of marijuana prohibition have promoted an exaggerated potential for harm and have spread misinformation about cannabis’s impact on society. Some of the very same misleading and erroneous statements are being promulgated again during this year’s legislative session.

I will try to limit my forthcoming comments to some of the misinformation regarding the mostly medical aspects of legalizing adult cannabis use.

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CANNABIS: There is no medication, commercial product, substance, or even food that is completely without any adverse effects. At least as applied to some portions of the consuming population. Cannabis is no different. However, it is far less harmful than portrayed by its critics. Cannabis must be dosed and consumed properly. There are some people that should never use cannabis and may be at greater risks of significant adverse effects. But as examples, we do not ban peanuts because 0.5% of adults have peanut allergies. We do not ban penicillin because 10% of people are allergic. We do not ban alcohol because almost 11% of adults abuse alcohol. We do not even ban tobacco products though we

know it can cause lung cancer! A responsible society places age limitations, licensing restrictions, product labels about proper dosing and content, and educational and warning information about these products. This is what HB1246 does.

CANNABIS AND MORTALITY. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report *Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base* states that “epidemiological data indicate that in the general population marijuana use is not associated with increased mortality”³. Again, let us contrast cannabis to tobacco and alcohol products. “Tobacco smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S. It is estimated that there are over 480,000 deaths caused by cigarette smoking each year”.⁴ “Excessive alcohol use was responsible for about 178,000 deaths each year during 2020-2021, or 488 deaths per day”⁵. The risk of death due to direct cannabis use is negligible. Most of these rare deaths⁶ were not due to direct cannabis toxicity but rather associated circumstances like traumatic injury or pre-existing conditions exacerbated by cannabis use. In a study reported in the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, in Florida for the 6-year period from 2014-2020, there were 386 deaths that may have been related to the use of cannabis products. However, 258 of these deaths (67%) were due to synthetic cannabis, substances that are sold illegally by the illicit market and in smoke shops. These products are specifically not permitted by HR 1246.

CANNABIS AND CANCER. Pooled analysis in an article in the *International Journal Cancer* that investigated the association between cannabis smoking and lung cancer risk found, once the data was adjusted for concomitant tobacco use, that there is no association. Studies that have suggested a possible association were not adjusted for the smoking of the mixture of tobacco with leaf cannabis or with individuals that also smoked tobacco separately⁷. In contrast, tobacco smoking and lung cancer have been conclusively linked since the 1950s. More recently there is also growing evidence that links alcohol consumption is linked to at least 7 types of cancer⁸.

CANNABIS USE DISORDER. It is widely known that tobacco and alcohol can be addictive. There is a Cannabis Use Disorder too, but its prevalence among adult cannabis users is similar to the prevalence of alcohol use disorder but lower than nicotine dependency⁹.

In addition, legalizing adult use “cannabis at the state level does not increase other substance use disorders or use of illicit drugs among adults and, in fact, may reduce alcohol-related problems, according to recent Colorado University at Boulder research”¹⁰.

CANNABIS AS A GATEWAY DRUG: “There is no consensus of causality that cannabis is a gateway drug. Researchers disagree on whether marijuana...use leads a person to use more dangerous drugs like cocaine or heroin”.^{11,12} According to the CDC, “There is limited evidence suggesting that marijuana increases the risk of using other drugs”¹³. Alternate explanations like the “common factor” model suggests that certain individuals may have an underlying propensity for drug use not specific to any one substance. Also, environmental and social factors, rather than the pharmacological effects of cannabis, may play a significant role in drug use progression. In addition, cannabis illegality has brought cannabis consumers into contact with people (i.e. the illicit market) who also sell more harmful substances and in general there has been very little enforcement of smoke shops that sell untested cannabis without a license and illegal cannabis related products and even psychedelics.

Rather, my experiences has made me appreciate that cannabis can be an “exit-drug”. I have seen a considerable number of my patient’s use cannabis as a **substitute** for stronger and

more dangerous drugs that they had been taking for pain, anxiety, sleep issues, and the general ailments of aging. Most surprising to me is that I have also seen some opioid abuse disorder and PTSD patients successfully use cannabis to reduce their symptoms.

CANNABIS AND ADOLESCENTS: As of March 2024, there are 24 states that have legalized recreational marijuana for individuals aged 21 years and older. As support for legalization increases there are legitimate concerns that this will encourage youth marijuana use. It is a fact that there are certain adverse mental health impacts with associative cognitive and academic effects with adolescent cannabis use. We have heard this in public testimonies here at the legislature in the past year and undoubtedly we will hear them again this year. But the facts just do NOT link Recreational Use Laws with increased marijuana use in adolescence. In fact, the data suggests the opposite:

In my testimony last year, I quoted the Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Nora Volkow. She testified at a March 23, 2022 Senate Health, Education and Labor & Pensions committee hearing, and said: “in the United States, legalization by some states of marijuana has not been associated with an increase in adolescents’ marijuana use.”¹⁴. Even more recent, the American Medical Association (AMA) has published two significant studies in 2024 regarding adolescent cannabis use in STATES WITH RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA LAWS. On April 15, 2024 a study was published by JAMA Pediatrics that found marijuana legalization and retail sales were NOT associated with increased adolescent cannabis use¹⁵. The key findings in this study were that recreational cannabis laws were not linked to higher likelihood or frequency of cannabis use among teens; and that with each additional year after the enactment of these laws, there appears to be even less cannabis use in adolescents. Also, the opening of retail markets was not associated with increased cannabis use among teens; and in general, legalization was associated with modest DECREASES in cannabis, alcohol and e-cigarette use. Another research article published in JAMA Psychiatry also had similar results with NO evidence that recreational marijuana laws were associated with encouraging youth marijuana use and legalization was not associated with current marijuana use or frequent marijuana use among adolescents¹⁶.

So, we see that the cannabis related opposition to HB 1246 that specifically link the passage of this legislation with the likelihood of increased adolescent cannabis and other drug (“gateway effect”) use are just not backed by the acts. What we do hear from the opposition is anecdotal and frequently hyperbolic.

DUI AND OTHER CRIME: “Many of the social ills that opponents warned about a decade ago have not come to pass”. In Colorado, “DUIs and crime did not explode following legalization. And several studies have shown that opioid and deaths have actually declined in states following legalization”¹⁷. Also, it should be noted that much of the statistics that show driver’s behavior was “marijuana linked” are erroneous. It has been established that blood testing for THC has very limited reliability in detecting **recent** cannabis use. This is because THC can be detected in a person’s blood for up to 30 days! Therefore, the detection of THC levels in blood does not consistently correlate with impairment or recent use¹⁸.

HIGH-POTENCY CANNABIS: The other recent common argument against cannabis is that modern marijuana products have increased in potency. While this is definitely true, some perspectives are applicable. People have different tolerances and different rates of metabolic

degradation of substances. Cannabis products have a wide range of potency. Likewise, almost every pharmaceutical medication comes in varying dosages. Alcohol products also vary in potency. Beer, wine and hard liquor vary dramatically in alcohol content. Standard beer has 4.5-5% alcohol content, wine averages about 12%, while hard alcohol spirits have an average of 35-60% alcohol content. It should not be surprising or problematic that the products sold in retail cannabis stores have a varying degree of the active ingredient (THC content). A person is highly unlikely to drink the equivalent of a “six pack” quantity of hard whisky or take a handful of medicine without being aware of proper dosing. Similarly, an adult consuming a cannabis infused product will quickly learn what dose is appropriate. A higher potency of cannabis just means a smaller amount is required to get the desired effect. This becomes especially significant and desirable with smokable cannabis products. The higher-potency argument of modern cannabis is actually an argument for passage of HB 1246 as its regulations require 3rd party testing and labeling of contents, potency and dosage of all the cannabis products sold by the licensee. The “illicit market” has no such constraints.

ILLICIT MARKET: There are 6 DOH inspectors for our 8 legal medical license holders. Our license alone has had 6 inspections at our facilities in 2024 alone. There are very strict surveillance requirements at all our facilities. Over the last 8 years, the 8 legal medical licensees have proven that they follow the rules. In contrast, there is the robust Illicit Market in Hawaii. There is almost no enforcement of their illegality. **They sell untested, unlabeled, and untaxed cannabis, cannabis related products and psychedelics.** If one is truly concerned about cannabis use in adolescents, cannabis potency and contamination with bacteria, mold, pesticides, and heavy metals, then let’s enforce the existing laws against illegal sales and extend the rules and regulations to the adult population as they already exist in the medical cannabis space. The Illicit Market is responsible for the adulteration of cannabis with other more dangerous drugs as well as extending the availability of illegal dangerous drugs in general (like so-called “synthetic marijuana”, K2 and Spice, which are NOT cannabinoids)¹⁹. Smoke shops sometimes openly sell these and other harmful psychedelic products. If the legislature really wants to protect the people (and specifically the children) of Hawaii, it will pass laws that would focus attention and enforcement toward these kinds of illegal sales.

Passage of the HB 1246 will reduce the influence of the Illicit Market, just as the repeal of alcohol prohibition in the 1933 led to the almost complete elimination of the sale of “moonshine” and will allow law-abiding businesses to operate successfully. The law will extend the present medical cannabis rule requiring a government issued I.D. requirement to legally purchase cannabis, preventing those under 21 years old from purchasing cannabis at licensed retail stores. It would also require proper testing and labeling for potency and contaminants to all future legal license holders. Enforcement of this law will be necessary to truly accomplish the goal of reducing adolescent use and protect adult consumers.

WAR ON DRUGS

Cannabis is not a new substance. It was first domesticated about 12,000 years ago in China. The earliest evidence of the use of cannabis as a versatile herbal medicine dates back to 2700 B.C.²⁰

Prohibitionists in Hawaii may think that they are winning the “war against cannabis” because they killed the legislation and regulation in last year’s Hawaii legislative session. They are trying hard to thwart the enactment of HB 1246 this year. However, this war against cannabis use has already been lost²¹ a long time ago. The marijuana illicit market here in Hawaii exists outside of any taxation, statute, administration, testing or reporting criteria, or control over adolescent availability. Cannabis use is ubiquitous in Hawaii, as it is elsewhere in this world. Bans have not worked.

But what we can accomplish here in Hawaii is what has already occurred in 24 states (and the District of Columbia and the two U.S. territories of Guam and North Mariana Islands). These places have chosen a logical approach to cannabis use through the passage of reasonable adult-use cannabis bills. Instead of banning cannabis and just ignoring the illicit market, they have chosen to regulate it. 58% of adult Hawaii residents favor legalizing recreational marijuana²². Hawaii residents have overwhelmingly supported an adult-use legislation. I am quite confident that if Hawaii had a constitutional process for voter referendums or ballot initiatives, as exists in many other states²³, this would have occurred several years ago. Our only pathway here in Hawaii is through the legislative process. I strongly urge you to pass HB1246.

Warmest Aloha and thank you for considering my testimony,

Mark T. Rothstein, M.D.
Medical Director Green Aloha Ltd

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://health.hawaii.gov>; Cannabis Tax PIG Report-Final.pdf. Aug 12, 2022.

² estimated by Hawaii Cannabis Industry Association as quoted in *NORMA NEWSL*, February 9, 2023.

³ IOM (Institute of Medicine). *Marijuana and medicine: Assessing the science base*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1999. Pg. 109.

⁴ The CDC National Health Report Highlights. Preventable Causes of Death in the U.S. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pg 8.

⁵ WWW.CDC.GOV; “Deaths From Excessive Alcohol Use In The United States”. Pg. 1.

⁶ Florida Atlantic University, “*Fau Study First to Show Statewide Cannabis-Related deaths in Florida*”. Giselle Galoustian, Ruth Tappen, Ed.D., R.N., FAAN, and Elizibeth R. Aston, Ph.D. Published 2/9/2023

⁷ Cannabis Smoking and Lung Cancer: Pooled Analysis in the International Lung Cancer Consortium. *Int. J Cancer*.2014 Jun30; 136(4): 984-903.doi:10.1002/ijc.29036.

⁸ Alcohol link to 7 cancers: University of Miami Miller school of Medicine, Clinical Care, *Alcohol Consumption Linked to Seven Types of Cancer*, Ana Veciana-Suarez, January 16, 2025.

⁹ *Recreational Marijuana Laws and Teen Marijuana Use, 1991-2021*. D.Mark Anderson, PhD, Hao T. Fe, PhD, Yang Liang, PhD, et al. *JAMA Psychiatry* 2024;81(8):840:842. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.0698.

¹⁰ <https://www.colorado.edu/today/2023/01/24/gateway-drug-no-more-study-shows-legalizing-recreational-cannabis-does-not-increase>

¹¹ Risk of Using Other Drugs; Mayet A, Legleye S, Beck F, Falissama B, Chau N. The Gateway Hypothesis, Common Liability to Addictions or the Route of Administration Model? A Modeling Process linking the Three Theories. *European Addiction Research*, 2016;22(2):107-117. This is sited in an article on the cdc.gov website titled Marijuana and Public Health. Pg. 1

¹² Mayet A, Legleye S, Chou N, Falissama B. Transitions Between Tobacco and Cannabis Use Among Adolescents: A Multi-State Modeling of Progression to Daily Use. *Addictive Behavior* 2011; 36(11):1101-1105. This is sited in an article on the cdc.gov website titled Marijuana and Public Health. Pg. 1

¹³ WWW.CDC.GOV in Cannabis and Public Health, Key points. Pg. 1

¹⁴ www.mpp.org ;Marijuana Policy Project. Teen Marijuana Use Does Not Increase Following Marijuana Policy Reform. Page 1.

¹⁵ *Recreational Cannabis Legislation, Retail Sales, and Adolescent Substance Use Through 2021*. Rebeal Levine Coley, PhD, Naoka Cary JD, Claudia Kruzik, PhD, et al. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2024; 178(6):622-625. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics. 2024.0555

¹⁶*Recreational Marijuana and Teen Marijuana Use, 1993-2021*; D. Mark Anderson PhD, Hao T. Fe, PhD,, Yang Liang PhD, et al. *JAMA Psychiatry* 2024;81(8):840:842. Doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.0698

¹⁷<https://www.colorado.edu/today/2022/11/04/decade-after-legalizing-cannabis-colorado-here-what-we-learned>

¹⁸ DNA Legal, *A Guide To Cannabis Drug Testing*, November 6, 2023

¹⁹www.dea.gov ; Spice/K2, Synthetic Marijuana? Pg. 1

²⁰“A Potted History”; *Nature* 525, S10-11 (2015), Stephanie Pain.

²¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov ;War on Drug Policing and Police Brutality; Pg. 1

²² <https://info.prp-hawaii.com/hawaii-perspectives-winter-2023-issue>

²³Perplexity AI references that 13 states have passed Adult-Use Cannabis through voter referendums or ballot initiatives rather than through legislative action. Article in Tax Foundation by Adam Hoffer, Jacob Macumber-Rosin Nov. 14, 2024

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:42:12 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janice Palma-Glennie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

aloha,

To start, i'm not a marijuana user but many, if not most, of the people i know are in varying frequency. Those people are hardworking, tax paying citizens -- mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties and grandparents. It's clear from public surveys and scientific evidence, that our state is far behind the curve in passing the legalisation of marijuana for recreational use, and for more good reasons than i will go into here. Suffice it to say that people who aren't criminals are still rotting away in our jails for possessing pot while adults can drink alcohol til they're flat on their faces. marijuana doesn't make people violent like alcohol does. And the dependency factor, though still possibly out for a around-the-edges study, shows quite clearly that alcohol is physically addictive while marijuana is not.

yes, there should be age and other sensible limits to the use of all drug-like substances, but this law is out of touch and, frankly, it's hard to even see where it came from. Mars? Where is the scientific proof that smoking marijuana causes homelessness? holy moly.

are we going to be a benevolent state whose laws are based on science and even financial responsibility (since marijuana is a hugely valuable crop) or a radical right-wing state run by people who are out of step and even in disbelief of science and reality? the latter is where this bill would take us.

vote "NO" on HB1246 -- a regressive, cruel, ignorant piece of legislation.

mahalo for your attention and willingness to see the facts.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:47:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael plumhoff	deschedule.earth	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

HB 1246

Written Testimony

OPPOSE

I, Michael Plumhoff of deschedule.earth CLERK

HOW DARE YOU - call cannabis1548* Recreational

We see you are following Colorado 2012 misdirection calling it Recreational or Adult use

ALL cannabis is health and wellness based on scientific fact that 144 cannabinoids are in the whole natural plant and 150 conabs. are in the Human body

We the people of the Slave thinking Plantation minds of Hawaii Islands see the abuse of power and the controlling USA corporation LAWS are being forced on us

We see how you are using this bill to law to keep the whole plant in a get high box

NA NA Cannabis is Foodfirst.us it is energy it is fire resident building materials

Where is the public hearing on all the other uses

Where is the hearing on the breach of public trust Sherman antitrust act false claims act

Equal Protection Clause ALL of this is coming out - yeah we talking real story here

EMBARRASSING ON NOTICE by the real real Canna Community

NOTE: When will we see the affidavit from all elected officials they are not conflict out - compromised - extorted or otherwise captive by big Cannabis big pharma dark money

This is trash garbage dog water controlling bias legislature

ALOHA, I am Lynn Last Rothstein, a **75**-year-old businesswoman, former public-school teacher, artist, and past president of a well-known arts organization.

I have used medical cannabis **for several years**. I have **never** progressed to hard drugs of any kind. I use cannabis at home the same way as someone who has a glass of wine or a beer a few times a week.

I don't like to drink alcohol for several reasons. It has recently been linked to increases in at least 7 different cancers. "Nearly 4% of cancers diagnosed worldwide in 2020 can be attributed to alcohol consumption according to the World Health Organization. In the United States alone, about **75,000 cancer cases and 19,000 deaths are estimated to be linked to alcohol each year**". This is true for breast cancer, which I have had. Studies have shown that as little as one drink a day increases breast cancer risk in women.

I abstain from cannabis when I travel. Even after 3 weeks abroad, I have absolutely no cravings or withdrawal symptoms. I have heard arguments against cannabis related to the potent strains currently available. I believe this is disingenuous since the STRONGER the cannabis the LESS I consume to get the desired effect.

I support this HB 1246 legislation. I would like to walk into a licensed shop to buy cannabis legally and know it has been tested for adulterants, pesticides, molds, heavy metals and potency.

I also have no desire to support the "illicit market" where federal, state and local taxes aren't paid, and products aren't tested. Without government regulations it can be sold to minors.

Legal, licensed dispensaries are appropriate for adults over 21. This has worked in 24 states and opioid overdose deaths have declined in states following legalization. Recent studies have also revealed that there has been no increase in adolescent cannabis use or other drug use in states that have legalized adult-use cannabis. I believe that a robust legal market can reduce the influence of the illicit market in much the same way as the

end of Prohibition reduced moonshine, “rumrunners” and speakeasies and its associated criminal activities.

I urge the committee to support HB 1246.

Mahalo for your time

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:10:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Golojuch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Due to the great financial havoc the Federal government is creating. Our state needs as many was to raise funding for schools, feeding our children in schools fix the infrastructure and provide for our homeless.

By looking at the numbers of States that have made marijuana legal, it is our responsibility to help our State.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:21:53 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lois	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do not make Cannabis legal in Hawaii. Oregon tried this , and was disaster out. They are now trying to overturn the disastrous law in Oregon. Kill this bill

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:25:38 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Heartfield PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass HB1246. It's time to finally de-drimitize this plant that has many medicinal qualities and is much safer than alcohol, which is already legal. It would generate tens of millions of dollars to serve Hawai'i residents, including for youth services and to help social equity with start-up, training, and technical assistance.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:50:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in **STRONG OPPOSITION!!!**

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:53:27 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Schofield	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Our Respected Representatives:

Please accept my written testimony in opposition to legalizing recreational marijuana. As a drug and alcohol industry professional with 25 years of experience, I have seen the detriment of recreational use. The normalization of acceptance tells our kids that marijuana is good for them. That their parents do it, so it is ok for them, as well. The marijuana industry will tell you that they will not market to the younger people. That will end up being a false narrative, as evidenced by the marketing tactics they use in other states. One only needs to review the Quest Diagnostics Drug Index Survey to see the trends of all illicit drugs and how they have changed in light of recreational use. It took us decades to reduce smoke inhalation and lung cancer due to the advance marketing of the industry. Are you will to jeopardize the lungs of future generations? Have you contaced your peers in other legal states to see how they fared with legal marijuana? Have you notice the even Amsterdam has place guardrails on the use in that country? Tax money? In Alaska, the marijuana sellers are now asking for tax relief, even though THEY set the number upon legalization. Why? Because the black market undercuts them and that is unfair, in their opinion. Recreational weed sets you up to need new departments, new enforcement, testing facilities, and monitoring. It increases crime as those establishments are targets due to their large grow operations. It drives other business out, as being located next to a grow operation, the smell infiltrates your space. It drives down tourism because people don't go on vacation to inhale your weed at the beach. We also must recognize that, as of today, we do not have a scientific understanding of what "under the influence" is for marijuana. In Alaska, legal recreational was set to be in your home, not in public. Instead, there are people smoking marijuana, on the way to work, with kids in the car. Laws around that will need to be established. However, with no idea of what "under the influence" is, it will be difficult to win a case, regardless of the reason for the charge. Think of it like alcohol, .08 has been determined to be the number we can agree to work around. We do not have sugch a designation for marijuana. Also, even in a traffic stop, we do not have a field ready test that will hold up in court. There are breathalyzers being developed, however, I do not think we will see those in markets for a few more years. As a testing professional, we currently test for marijuana in many ways, urine, hair, nails, saliva and sweat. All require laboratory verification, especially for situations with a legal challenge. That takes time. Unlike alcohol, where we have the science in the breathalyzer to get a result immediately, we don't have that for marijuana. You could get blood, if there is a facility that can run that test quickly. AND provided that a licensed phlebotomist is available to perform the venipuncture. As you can see, there is so much more that goes into legal recreational use, and frankly, we are just not ready for it.

Currently, on the Big Island, there are few places that you can go and not encounter illicit use. It's sad to see that our elders and keiki must transit areas where they are being assaulted by the odors. Shameful, we should do something about that. All that being said, we must recognize that we also have huge issues with other drugs. Narcan distribution is critical, at this point in time, as is absolute arrests for fentanyl. But those are conversations for another day.

I am available for further conversations, should you wish to have them. With 25 years in doing this work, as a founding member of the National Drug and Alcohol Screening Association, and a member of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse in Alaska. I live in Hawaii most of the year, so I have a strong bond with what is happening on the island. As a homeowner on the Big Island, I want my neighborhood to be free of crime and drug use. I desire safe places for my grandkids to play and smoke free areas to breathe the lovely Hawaii breezes.

I implore you to take my notes into consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Schofield, CEO

TSS, Inc

78-117 Holua Road

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:01:26 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dale Rosenfeld	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of H.B.1246

Aloha. I am Dale Rosenfeld, 71 years old, living on the island of Kaua'i for over 35 years.

I'm testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

I have been legally consuming and growing medical cannabis since the law allowed. I am a cannabis activist, educator, and the creator of the Kaua'i Cannabis & Hemp Conference 2019 and the facilitator for Conscious Cannabis Conversations, a podcast and in person exploration of all things cannabis.

Adult use and access to cannabis is crucial for kupuna. As I educate multitudes of adults over 55, I find so many have basic questions that funding for education would help answer. Cannabis for adult use would also help kupuna who don't qualify for medical cards gain access to this medicine. Many are unable to physically grow due to their conditions and could be helped immeasurably by cannabis. Doctors are hesitant to discuss cannabis, especially when that discussion is most important, i.e., at the end stage of life. Adults need open education on strains, terpenes, methods of consumption and more.

By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai'i can raise millions of dollars for **true** public safety programs—adult and youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

Mahalo for your time.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:18:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sydney Suzuki	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for wanting the best for Hawaii and want you to no that I am opposed to this bill HB1246 because my fear for the children using this drug. Please protect their future and vote against it. Mahalo!

Sydney Suzuki

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:20:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jun James Sogi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support recreational legalization of marijuana.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:34:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Gallardo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose HB1246. Recreational marijuana legalization has failed in other states, increasing homelessness and crime. Hawai'i's leaders should focus on strengthening families and addressing real community needs, not normalizing drug use. Please vote NO on HB1246.

Justen TN Paiva

February 3, 2025

Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 S Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813A

Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of House Bill 1246 (HB1246)

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1246 (HB1246) and urge its passage. As a dedicated advocate for the growth and sustainability of Hawai'i's cannabis industry, I believe this bill presents a transformative opportunity to advance our economy, protect public health, and ensure equity in our state's regulatory framework for cannabis.

HB1246 is a significant step forward in establishing a safe, legal, and regulated adult-use cannabis market, while reinforcing protections for medical cannabis patients. This bill introduces a structured licensing framework, equitable taxation policies, and clear compliance guidelines, forming the foundation for a thriving and responsible cannabis industry in Hawai'i.

Key Benefits of HB1246

- **Economic Growth & Job Creation:** Legalizing adult-use cannabis will expand business opportunities and generate new employment in cultivation, processing, retail, and distribution.
- **Increased State Revenue:** The structured taxation model ensures that cannabis sales contribute meaningfully to public services, education, and healthcare initiatives.
- **Social Equity & Inclusion:** HB1246 prioritizes local and social equity applicants, ensuring that those historically impacted by cannabis prohibition have a fair opportunity to participate in the legal market.
- **Consumer & Public Safety:** By mandating seed-to-sale tracking, packaging regulations, and product testing, this bill establishes a framework that promotes transparency and consumer confidence. Studies confirm that legalizing cannabis is not correlated with increased traffic fatalities (*NORML, www.norml.org*), and almost everybody tested registered over 25 nanograms of active THC in their system, but many would not have gotten arrested (*HPD Traffic Enforcement Unit, Sgt. Thomas Koyanagi*).
- **Sustainability & Environmental Protection:** The bill encourages responsible cultivation practices that align with Hawai'i's commitment to environmental conservation and resource efficiency.

- Improved Public Health Outcomes: Research indicates that legalizing cannabis leads to immediate declines in opioid use and overdose rates (*Marijuana Moment*, www.marijuanamoment.net), and in states with both medical and recreational cannabis, fewer patients fill prescriptions for anxiety medications (*The Conversation*, www.theconversation.com).
- Decreased Crime Rates: Contrary to common misconceptions, studies have shown that cannabis legalization does not increase violent crime rates; in fact, it may lead to declines in homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault (*University of Washington Libraries*).
- Youth Use Remains Stable: According to the Marijuana Policy Project (www.mpp.org), adult-use cannabis legalization corresponds with a decrease in teen/adolescent use.
- Debunking the Gateway Myth: Cannabis is often labeled as a "gateway drug," but according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, <https://nida.nih.gov>), this is not supported by scientific evidence.
- Cannabis is Safer than Alcohol & Tobacco: Studies published in *The Hill* (www.thehill.com) confirm that cannabis is objectively less harmful than alcohol and tobacco—being less toxic, less addictive, and less likely to contribute to violence or reckless behavior.

HB1246 is more than just a piece of legislation—it is a vision for a sustainable, equitable, and thriving cannabis industry that aligns with Hawai'i's values and economic interests.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB1246 and help pave the way for a safer, more just, and economically beneficial cannabis industry in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justen TN Paiva

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:51:38 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Germaine Meyers	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB1246.

I've witness the negative effects on the lives of consumers of illegal recreational marijuana addiction. Also the negative effects on their ohana, keiki and kupuna.

I agree with many others that have voiced their concerns as follows:

- 1) We already have enough problems with poverty, smash and grab violence, domestic violence;
- 2) Cannabis is dangerous in and of itself....it can lead to schizophrenia, psychosis, mental illness in later life....especially in the teens and early 20's and IT'S INCURABLE. Plus IT LEADS TO LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT, HOMELESSNESS, HOPELESSNESS;
- 3) The consequences of legalized recreational marijuana are much, much worse than the benefits. So what if we make a little money and our kids are all messed up and they can hold a job or relationship because they are all messed up. We are in trouble;
- 4) This is a legacy legislation. All the money in the world is not going to make up for all the families that were damaged and will be damaged because of recreational marijuana and it's hopes of improved income;
- 5) The environmental price tag, social price tag, and the youth price tag that is not worth the hopes of improved income;
- 6) Recreational Marijuana goes against our hopes of kulia I ka nu'u;
- 7) Our native communities already has problems with health issues....what's the health benefits beyond just a few bucks? Children who has not been born yet...this is about what kind of legacy do we want to leave for our children.

I humbly ask for our Representatives to OPPOSE HB1246.

Ke Akua pu,

GERMAINE MEYERS, Nanakuli Hawaiian Homestead Lessee

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:52:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee Eisenstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to support HB 1246. Few people understand what cannabis is and I've never met a lawmaker that actually knew anything of substance about it. Here is what it is. The marijuana plant produces chemicals called cannabinoids. All creatures above the insect also produce this class of chemicals, called, ENDOCANNABINOIDS (internal marijuana). Clinical research shows they are vital for longevity, resistance to diseases and conditions, support psychological flexibility when a creature experiences a change in environment and they are so vital to life, that all mother's milk is loaded with them. That is what marijuana/cannabis is, a plant that produces these same class of chemicals. There is no honest state interest in what adults do with cannabis in their personal lives. We already have impairment laws on the books regarding the public sphere. Pharmaceutical marijuana (Marinol/Dronabinol), is stronger than natural marijuana and comes with this recommendation. "Do not drive or do other activities that require alertness or coordination **until you know how dronabinol affects you.**" In other words, once a person is familiar with the effects, they should be capable of functioning normally doing these activities." People of course, should drive in a clear headed state and those above are the official guidelines. Historically the, "Oldest evidence of marijuana use discovered in 2500-year-old cemetery in peaks of western China. THC levels in braziers show mourners along the ancient Silk Road inhaled." There is NO compelling state interest in the state inserting itself into the affairs of adults, regarding personal use of cannabis and it is time to modernize (or more accurately, from a historical perspective, to RENORMALIZE our relationship to this plant.

Please vote YES ON HB 1246. Some additional information regarding cannabis. Recently, an archeological excavation found the residue of burnt cannabis in a sacramental bowl in an important Hebrew Temple, establishing that cannabis was a holy sacrament to the Hebrews, a practice common at the time in the region. There have been Biblical scholars going back a generation (starting with Sula Benet), who state that the healing oil of Jesus primary ingredient was canna bosome, "fragrant reed" ie. cannabis. The noxious Cannabis Prohibition Laws were first sold to the public under the umbrella of a white supremacist ideology ie. "marijuana made white women seek out black and Mexican men for sex" and the public was told it was a, "threat to the sanctity of the white race." That's an ugly start to a policy (marijuana prohibition laws), that needs to be dumped, so these racist, counterproductive laws can take their rightful place in the ash heap of history. Please vote YES on HB 1246. Mahalo.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:53:49 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patrick Rorie	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Hawaii State Representative,

As we decide what should be accomplished at this year's Legislative Session, please consider the following..

Please vote 'No' to the legalization of recreational marijuana in the State of Hawaii (HB1246).

Why? Here are 6 good reasons...

1) It is illegal on the Federal level, and in 26 of 50 United States the use of recreational marijuana is illegal - let's not become a part of the radical minority.

2) Legalized marijuana creates steep costs for society and taxpayers that far outweigh its tax revenues.

3) We already have enough problems with drunk drivers on our roads. If this bill is passed, we will have drivers under the influence of marijuana who might crash and kill themselves (and perhaps others, **including you and your family**). The State of Colorado, where recreational marijuana use is legal, has reported that marijuana-related traffic deaths rose 62 percent.

4) What are we telling our children? And how many of them will become addicted to marijuana, which, studies show, harms the brain and will increase mental health problems?

5) The use of marijuana can lead to the use of other, more harmful drugs like cocaine or heroin.

6) It is **opposed by the Honolulu and Maui Police Departments, the state Department of Transportation, the Honolulu Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii, and Hawaii Family Forum.**

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

Most sincerely and with Aloha,

Patrick Rorie (Hawaii resident since 1987, tax payer, voter)

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:59:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jodi Won	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am strongly opposed to the legalization of marijuana because of the impact it has had on my family and others I've seen, growing up, my parents started using it casually, and it eventually led them down a dangerous path to harder substances. I've witnessed firsthand how seemingly harmless use can spiral into addiction and cause significant damage to both individuals and families. Its not just about the marijuana itself, but about the broader implications for public health, safety, and the well being of future generations

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:59:25 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chrissie Brown	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

From: Chrissie Brown

Date: 02/03/2025

Testimony in Support of HB1246

Aloha,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1246, which seeks to legalize adult-use cannabis in Hawaii and establish a comprehensive regulatory framework. This bill is a critical step towards creating a fair and inclusive cannabis market that benefits the state, businesses, patients, and consumers.

Horizontal Business Model: It is essential to adopt a horizontal business model that makes the industry accessible to local farmers and entrepreneurs. This approach ensures that the economic opportunities created by legalization are available to a broader range of residents, rather than being monopolized by a few large corporations. A horizontal model fosters competition, innovation, and economic growth within our communities.

Learning from Maine: Hawaii does not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to cannabis regulation. The state of Maine has successfully implemented a regulatory framework that supports all stakeholders involved. By drawing on Maine's experience, we can create a system that is effective, efficient, and supportive of local businesses.

Dispelling Outdated Myths: The current monopolized market is anchored in antiquated propaganda and unfounded fears surrounding cannabis. Extensive research has demonstrated that cannabis has significant medical benefits and is less addictive, harmful, and intoxicating than alcohol. It is imperative that Hawaii offers adults the option to use cannabis, particularly given the regulatory approach to alcohol within the state and across the nation.

Room for Diverse Enterprises: The comparison between large-scale and small-scale cannabis businesses can be drawn from the beer industry. Just as there are major corporate breweries like Budweiser coexisting alongside thousands of craft breweries, there is ample opportunity for both large and small cannabis enterprises to thrive. The "Big 8" dispensaries, with their established brands, investments, and efforts, will still have significant opportunities, if not more, to succeed

in a dual market. This inclusive market structure encourages innovation, diversity, and consumer choice, benefiting the industry as a whole.

Overregulation Concerns: I caution against *overregulating* all aspects of the cannabis plant. We must ask ourselves if breweries, bars, and stores are held to the same stringent regulations for producing or selling alcohol? Is it truly the dangers of cannabis that requires such standards? For example, Why not have peanut butter in cases in stores to protect people with allergies, over 200 people die each year in the USA from coming into contact with it. Where is the line for the government's role in protecting the population? Overregulation of cannabis to protect the public from unfounded dangers is nonsensical and expensive. A balanced approach is necessary to ensure public safety while promoting industry growth.

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB1246 and help move Hawaii towards a more progressive and equitable cannabis policy. This bill represents an opportunity to create a fair, inclusive, and economically beneficial market for all of Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chrissie Brown

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:00:13 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
carl nagasako	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to oppose HB1246. Aside from the usual key reasons such as the negative health impacts especially for young people (all of the same issues with smoking cigarettes), higher incidence of traffic and work related accidents, and the potential for an explosion of unregulated sales of cannabis by individuals and groups, the main reason I oppose this bill is the very sad impact it has had on friends and people I have known.

Like alcohol, some people can not stop using it excessively, have significant health impacts, and/or have a significant negative cognitive and reasoning decline to the point that they ruin their lives.

To make recreational marijuana legal is to put Hawaii as saying to all our citizens that it is ok to use it and thus encourage a great expansion of its use.

It does not make sense to encourage more products that can deeply harm some of our citizens. The purpose of laws should be to protect our ohana from potential harm.

Please vote No. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:03:57 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michal C Cohen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support legalization and I support ensuring the rights of all of the farmers in our community to continue to grow for the community and I support caregiver's rights to grow on behalf of those who can't grow on their own. Please protect our medical patients and allow them to transfer. Please re-instate the caregiver program to have more patients per caregiver. We want equity for farmers, no limitation for canopy size for ag land. Thank you, Michal Cohen, LCSW

Testimony submitted as an individual in opposition to HB 1246 which proposes to legalize the personal use of cannabis.

The lead-off question is “why”? What is the objective of HB1246? What positive social purpose could it possibly achieve?

Because it’s hard to regulate or because everybody uses it already are not legitimate reasons. If we’re being honest, there is absolutely no positive purpose for such legislation. Adding tax revenue is not a good reason. And such a measure will definitely not save the state money. In fact, we should expect expenses associated with regulation, enforcement, medical costs, and violations to increase. What truly positive social programs will suffer because of the diversion of funds?

In fact, research into the effects of marijuana legalization has identified several potential negative impacts:

- **Increased Usage and Dependence:** Legalization has been associated with a rise in marijuana consumption. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that legalization increased both marijuana use and marijuana abuse/dependence in individuals aged 21 or older.
- **Public Health Concerns:** There is evidence linking marijuana use to mental health issues, including psychosis and schizophrenia, especially among individuals with a family history of these conditions. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health notes that cannabis use disorder is a recognized condition, and marijuana use can trigger psychotic symptoms.
- **Increased Hospitalizations:** Following legalization, some regions have reported a rise in hospital visits related to cannabis use. For instance, a 2020 narrative review indicated that cannabis-related hospitalizations in Colorado increased after recreational legalization.
- **Adolescent Use:** Legalization may lead to higher marijuana use among adolescents due to increased availability and social acceptance. A study highlighted that people aged 12 to 20 were 5 to 6 percent more likely to try marijuana for the first time when medical use was legalized.
- **Impaired Cognitive Function:** Regular marijuana use, particularly starting in adolescence, can impair cognitive functions such as learning, thinking, and memory. The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation reports that marijuana use has been linked to mental health issues, including psychosis.
- **Increased Traffic Accidents:** Some studies suggest that regions with legalized marijuana have experienced higher rates of motor vehicle accidents and fatalities involving drivers under the influence of cannabis.
- **Economic Challenges:** The anticipated economic benefits of legalization, such as increased tax revenue, have not always materialized as expected. For example, in Colorado, cannabis sales peaked at \$2.2 billion in 2021 but dropped to \$1.5 billion the following year, impacting tax revenues and leading to job losses. These findings underscore the importance of carefully considering the potential negative consequences of marijuana legalization and implementing appropriate regulations to mitigate these risks.

So, answer the WHY question honestly, and if you cannot, then why would you approve it?

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:19:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Wendy Gibson-Viviani	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

TO: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS and COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

FROM: Wendy Gibson-Viviani RN/BSN, Co-chair of the American Cannabis Nurses Association Education and Research Committee. Member of the Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform

Hearing DATE/TIME: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: State Capitol Conference Room 325 and Via Videoconference

RE: **HB1246 In Strong Support** of Adult-use Legalization

Dear Committee Chairs, Tarnas and Kahaloa, Vice Chairs, Poepoe and Kusch, and

Honorable Members of the Committees,

My name is Wendy Gibson-Viviani. I'm an RN who has lived in Hawaii for 31 years, worked on reforming drug laws and advocated for medical cannabis patients for 10 years.

As a Cannabis Nurse Educator, I am devoted to educating other healthcare professionals about medical cannabis safety and endocannabinoid system health. I serve as a Co-chair of the Education and Research Committee of the American Cannabis Nurses Association.

I served as the Field Organizer for the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i for 7 years. In 2022, I served on the Hawai'i Dual Use of Cannabis Task Force. I am now a member of the Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform.

I'm a part of a growing network of healthcare professionals who see that the **most damaging** effects of cannabis use are **NOT from actual ingestion of cannabis**, but are largely the **result of the criminalization of hundreds of thousands** of non-violent users.

The harms from mass incarceration and involvement in the criminal justice system have damaged the lives of more than 15.7 million U.S. citizens—and have disproportionately criminalized and incarcerated people of color.

Racism has created a Public Health Crisis in Hawaii. Please refer to HCR112 from 2021 entitled

“Racism as a Public Health Crisis”. This states . . . **Native Hawaiians are overrepresented** in state prisons, jails, and the school-to-prison pipeline. One of the reasons I support HB1246 is that it has a provision to try to address social Inequity.

In 2023, President Biden instructed the FDA to reassess the placement of cannabis in the Schedule I drug category of the CSA (a category reserved for the most dangerous substances with no medical use). The FDA concluded that cannabis does NOT belong there and advised the DEA to reschedule it to a less dangerous category – Schedule III

The FDA explained that cannabis use:

- **Poses a low-risk threat to public health**
- Has **less potential for misuse** than drugs in schedule I or II classes
 - Has legitimate (generally accepted) medical use for at least 15 conditions

The FDA also said that a **vast majority of people** who use cannabis – do so in a manner that does **NOT lead to dangerous outcomes to themselves or others**. They noted that cannabis is less toxic and less harmful to the body, less addictive and less likely to cause violent or reckless behavior – **than alcohol**.

As a responsible adult who does not drink alcohol, I should be free to choose to use a product that is **SAFER than alcohol—legally**. And, because alcohol WAS legalized for adult use, we have safety **controls on product quality and sales**, so adult consumers **know what strength** they are buying. We can do the same with cannabis legalization.

I am part of a growing network of healthcare professionals who also see **potential health benefits from legalization**. For example:

- Data collected from states that have legalized—show that when cannabis use goes up, the use of opiates, benzodiazepines and alcohol goes down.
 - These are the **top three substances that people overdose on every single day** in the U.S. Reducing use of these more harmful substances may lead to less overdose deaths, **less drugged driving**, and **less damages to health**.
- Legalization could also help expand Hawaii’s Medical Cannabis Program, because not all conditions that cannabis can be used to treat are on the list of “qualifying conditions.”
- A recent study suggests that cannabis consumers have lower rates of obesity and subsequent health conditions such as diabetes.

- The US DHHS had a patent on cannabinoids (**including THC and CBD**), claiming that they are neuroprotective and antioxidant agents, useful in **minimizing brain injury** from traumatic injury or ischemic stroke, and might be useful in TREATING Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and HIV Dementias. (See US. DHHS patent #6630507)
- People use cannabis in religious practices and to enhance healthy lifestyle practices. It has historically been paired with yoga and mindful meditation. It is used in sports: ultramarathoners are using cannabis at the 25 and 50-mile markers, to enhance their performance and in exercise recovery.

I believe that Former President Jimmy Carter said it best when he spoke to Congress in 1977. He said that “The penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself—and where they are they should be changed.”

We do know that the penalties for possession (think mass incarceration) have been more damaging than the actual use of cannabis. Our laws need to be changed so that we can **stop normalizing the criminalization** of people who want to be responsible cannabis users.

Please support adult-use legalization through HB1246. It contains the guardrails needed to support public health and safety. I believe that with good public health education programs, we can minimize the projected harms.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I will try to be available for any questions.

Wendy Gibson-Viviani RN/BSN --Kailua

Cannabis Nurse Educator. Medical Cannabis Patient Advocate

CannabiseducationHI@gmail.com

(808) 321-4503

Please Pass HB1246 and move it Forward. It is Important to me because:

- It is a Safe alternative to Alcohol Consumption or Cigarette Smoking.
- It will reduce the Black Market Sales and provides Safer Alternatives.
- Allow Smoking of the Cannabis Flower in areas where Cigarette Smoking is Allowed.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:21:56 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CALVIN T CHINEN	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I am opposed to HB 1246

Dear Honorable Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee and the Agriculture and Food Systems Committee,

Thank you so much for serving the people, the aina, and the culture of Hawaii! I am grateful for each one of you for your sacrificial service and aloha for all of us.

We already have Medical Marijuana and there is no need to legalize recreational marijuana. Those who really want it have easy access to it already. It is the best deterrent that we currently have in protecting our keiki. Already, the top disciplinary issue in our Middle and High Schools is vaping. If we legalize recreational marijuana, youth will have an even easier access to marijuana even though they are prohibited.

Marijuana has already been proven time and again to be harmful to youth and children and this will make it even more accessible. This legislation will surely affect the trajectory of the lives of many young people. They will be on a pathway of destruction and heartache for themselves, their families, and their future spouses and children. The dollars that the State of Hawaii make will be paid for on the wasted and destroyed lives not only of the users but upon the innocent children as well. We all know that this is true. We all have friends and family members who have already gone down this path.

There are many beautiful places in the world- beautiful islands, beaches and mountains but everyone knows that Hawaii stands out! What makes us so special? Our ALOHA! Our greatest attraction and commodity. Aloha in our people and our families. Our Aloha is known around the world. It is what makes Hawaii so special. This bill will NOT perpetuate, enhance or grow ALOHA. Please vote no.

Aloha,

Cal Chinen

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:35:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jael Esther Simonson Tunick	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

THIS BILL IS A FRAUD, IT DOES NOTHING FOR THE PEOPLE OF HAWAII AND EVERYTHING FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE DISPENSARIES! ABSOLUTELY ZERO RESEARCH AMONG CANNABIS USERS TO DETERMINE OUR NEEDS, LEGALIZATION USING THIS METHOD WILL BE A TRUE FAILURE BY THE GOVERNMENT. HOW CAN YOU SET UP A NEW SYSTEM OF RECREATIONAL CANNABIS WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN PROPERLY PROVIDE FOR YOUR CURRENT MEDICAL CANNABIS PATIENTS HERE IN HAWAII? DISPENSARIES CONTINUE TO PRODUCE PRODUCTS THAT DON'T EVEN MEET THE MINIMUM REQUIRED DOSAGE FOR HEAVY USERS WITH CHRONIC PAIN LIKE MYSELF--LEFT WITH ONLY WHAT THEY PROVIDE, I WOULD BE BANKRUPT WITHIN A MONTH FOR LESSER QUALITY PRODUCT THAT STILL WON'T MEET MY NEEDS. WHERE ARE THERE PEOPLE LOOKING AFTER OUR INTERESTS?! THIS IS ACTUAL LIFE AND DEATH HERE FOR SOME OF US, NOT A GAME OF COMMERCE. YOU NEED TO GIVE US THE PEOPLE THE ABILITY TO GIVE INPUT AND THE POWER TO HELP MAKE SOMETHING THAT WILL ACTUALLY BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF HAWAII, NOT JUST A FEW WEALTHY BUSINESS OWNERS. AFTER ALL, IT WAS INTERESTS SUCH AS THOSE THAT LED TO THE ILLEGAL OVERTHROW OF THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM. DON'T REPEAT HISTORY'S MISTAKE.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:36:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alfred Hagen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

This is a cynical bill in that the state at the expense of our citizens both directly and indirectly stands to make revenue by taxing the sale of marijuana.

This is a bad bill: negative, dark. sad and full of misery.

Please re-think what you are proposing. I urge you to vote NO on this bill.

I strongly oppose HB1246 and vote NO. We want the people of Hawaii bright-eyed, sharp in mind, and genuinely cheerful. Not re-eyed, dull, and stoned.

Respectfully submitted,

Alfred Hagen

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:44:14 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Drew Daniels	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I fully support the legalization of a dual-use market. Converting local farmers and traditional market operators into a regulated and taxed framework will generate significant tax revenue, improve public safety, empower Hawai'i's agricultural entrepreneurs, support tourism, and set up Hawai'i with appropriate infrastructure and workforce to be a leader when cannabis eventually becomes an exportable crop nationwide.

Cannabis is already abundantly available across Hawai'i and most of it is cheap imported flower from other markets that have failed testing or are federally legal hemp and THCA products ordered directly off the internet. By not creating and enforcing a framework like HB1246 does, we are not capturing this tax revenue and encouraging these gray area operators to send untaxed money out of state while selling untested products to minors.

You can find a list of resources further proving the positive social impacts cannabis legalization can have [here](#).

Mahalo for your consideration of the community's input and the democratic process.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:45:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pi'imauna Kackley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Opposing HB1246 / SB1613 - Relating to Cannabis

To: Members of the Hawaii State Legislature

February 3, 2025

Dear Honorable Members,

I am writing to express my opposition to HB1246 / SB1613 and all efforts to legalize and commercialize cannabis in the State of Hawaii.

To begin, cannabis is not the same drug it was even some years ago. Over the past 50 years, the concentration of THC – the main psychoactive substance in cannabis – has increased approximately 10-fold. This potency is what drives its danger, particularly its effects on anxiety, insomnia, depression, and psychosis.

When regulations on cannabis are relaxed, overall use increases, and not just among those over the age of 21. Studies have found that less restrictive cannabis policy environments are associated with increased past month use among both adults and youth (Pessar et al. 2024).

This spillover effect of use among youth is particularly troubling. Adolescent onset of cannabis use is associated with more neurocognitive deficits compared to those who initiate use in adulthood (Mashhoon et al. 2019). An analysis of four large epidemiologic trials found that cannabis use during adolescence is associated with reductions in the odds of high school completion and degree attainment in a dose-dependent manner (Silins et al. 2014). Cannabis consumption in adolescence is associated with increased risk of development of major depression in young adulthood, and suicidality, especially suicidal ideation (Gobbi et al. 2019). This starts with legalization: Statistics show a 9-14% greater risk for suicide-related mortality in 14- to 16-year-old youth living in states where recreational marijuana is legalized (Hammond et al. 2024). Cannabis also creates an increased risk of traffic accidents, already a major issue in Hawaii: in one study, cannabis use led to significant impairments on complex and novel driving-related tasks, as well as perceived driving safety and ability for up to 5 hours after use (Ogourtsova et al. 2018).

When cannabis is sold in stores, it is consumed in more ways. Cannabis legalization has been associated with increased use of alternative methods of consumptions (e.g. vapes, edibles) which are known to contain higher THC concentrations (Borodovsky et al. 2017). Importantly, the youth use of cannabis concentrates is associated with greater progression to long-term cannabis use (Barrington-Trimis et al. 2020). Thus, as cannabis regulations are relaxed, its use becomes heavier, as well as more chronic.

One of the most important consequences of this use is the development of cannabis-induced psychosis. Studies have demonstrated this association repeatedly. For instance, in Colorado, there has been observed a positive association between the number of cannabis dispensaries and rates of emergency department visits for psychosis in (Wang et al. 2022). Adolescent cannabis exposure predicts up to a twofold increase in risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia in adulthood (Levine et al. 2017). This association is highly variable based on underlying genetic risk – something nobody learns of until it is too late. For the genetic category corresponding to the bottom fifth of those at risk, cannabis use increases the odds of psychosis by 7%. For those genetically predisposed to be in the highest fifth, cannabis use increases the odds of psychosis by 67%. These numbers are based on a UK Biobank of over 100,000 individuals (Wainberg et al. 2021). In an even larger dataset, rates of schizophrenia attributable to cannabis have increased 3-4x over the past 20 years among 7 million people in Denmark. This is thought to be due to increases in THC potency over that period (Hjorthoj et al. 2021).

These numbers may seem like impersonal statistics, but I can assure you based on my experiences in the hospital and clinic that the damage done to human lives is all too real. I have observed and treated numerous patients and their families who have had their lives severely disrupted by cannabis use. My concern is that this danger will skyrocket if cannabis is legalized and commercialized in our state. I again urge you to vote NO on HB1246 / SB1613. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

R. Pi'imauna Kackley, MD

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:45:39 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chayanin Hamada	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Hawaii Legislative Committee and Representative,

My name is Chayanin Hamada or I go by "Jing", and I am a child and adolescent psychiatrist working in both inpatient and outpatient settings in Hawaii. I am writing to strongly oppose the legalization of marijuana in our state due to its devastating impact on adolescent mental health.

In my clinical practice, I have seen numerous cases of teenagers developing cannabis-induced psychosis, often presenting with paranoia, hallucinations, and severe cognitive impairment. While some improve after stopping marijuana use, I have also encountered patients who continue to experience hallucinations and persistent psychotic symptoms long after cessation, raising concerns about permanent neuropsychiatric damage.

Scientific evidence supports these clinical observations. Studies have shown that regular cannabis use in adolescence increases the risk of developing schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, particularly in those with genetic predispositions (Volkow et al., 2014). The risk is even higher with high-potency THC products, which are increasingly common in legalized markets (Di Forti et al., 2019). Furthermore, marijuana use has been linked to worsening depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior in youth (Gobbi et al., 2019).

Legalization has led to increased adolescent access and use in other states, despite regulations meant to prevent this. Colorado, for instance, saw a rise in marijuana-related emergency visits among adolescents after legalization (Wang et al., 2018). Hawaii should learn from these experiences rather than repeat their mistakes.

The mental health consequences of marijuana use in teenagers are too severe to ignore. As a psychiatrist, I find it terrifying to witness more young patients experiencing life-altering psychiatric conditions due to cannabis use. We must prioritize public health and protect our youth from the known harms of marijuana. I strongly urge you to vote against legalization to prevent a future mental health crisis in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me at chamada@dop.hawaii.edu if I can assist you with more information.

Sincerely,
Chayanin "Jing" Hamada, M.D.
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Reference

- Volkow, N. D., Baler, R. D., Compton, W. M., & Weiss, S. R. B. (2014). Adverse effects of marijuana use. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 370(23), 2219-2227.
- Di Forti, M., Quattrone, D., Freeman, T. P., et al. (2019). The contribution of cannabis use to variation in the incidence of psychotic disorder across Europe. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 6(5), 427-436.
- Gobbi, G., Atkin, T., Zytynski, T., et al. (2019). Association of cannabis use in adolescence and risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidality. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 76(4), 426-434.
- Wang, G. S., Hall, K., Vigil, D., et al. (2018). Marijuana and acute health care contacts in Colorado. *Preventive Medicine*, 104, 24-30.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:46:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chad Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe it's time for Hawaii to fix its medical program and get the state to move forward with a legal adult use program. I believe it is crucial that in legalizing we invest the time effort and funds to do it right. Our medical program example is a perfect reason to see why it needs to be taken seriously and allocated for so that the right changes are made and the right people who are apart of our communities help in creating an industry in Hawaii. Not only would it help jobs and locals to acquire licenses and opportunities it's crucial we make sure it stays Local and that local farmers are not only included but supported in these programs in making sure they are able to participate In a market. We also need to make sure the taxes and funding goes to the right places and not a general excise tax fund. A good program needs the money and support of the state to succeed. If we want to have any industry we must do it right the first time. Licenses need to go to locals and we need to be supported in making sure the right people qualify. This state has many able and willing farmers makers and craftsmen that can and should qualify for these licenses and opportunities. It is the states obligation to need to get these people in place to help get community involved.

It's no secret that cannabis is here and always has been. Our state has the opportunity to truly secure a great legal program that enriches our communities and helps our state overall for longevity in this world growing market place. I have and continue to participate in this industry. More than willing to help in anyway make sure this is done right. Hawaii really needs to stake their flag in this industry, it will allow locals to provide for their families and our communities be enriched not broken down. We all know what non legal states see. Floods of illegal and failed products enter their streets. Fixing that is educating and providing access to clean medicine for the people. The current dispensaries had had plenty of a head start on locals and others trying to provide good clean medicine for our state Cannabis is continuing to prove itself to be a healing plant and our communities not only need this our state as a whole has the opportunity to really do it right. I can be reached via this email or anyone in the community should be able to contact me. Chad Miller Madchiller

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:48:03 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Misako Hudson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I most strongly oppose HB1246. I oppose laws that fail to protect our children, community and island homes. There is too much to lose in supporting this type of bill which impacts all communities and socio economic classes.

While proponents argue that legalization will bring economic benefits and criminal justice reform, the counterarguments include an increase in usage and dependence, and worse, an increase in adolescent use, from the age of 12 to 20, when teens were most likely to try marijuana for the first time.

In a time when individuals are looking for healthy choices for themselves and their family. Legalizing marijuana is a step backwards in promoting healthy living. Children want to grow up to one day to create a family of their own, and parents desire to raise compassionate, successful adult children.

I have witnessed the negative impacts that recreational use of marijuana has had on family members, which include poor decision making like dropping out of high school three months before graduation, a lack of drive or motivation to keep a steady job to support oneself, stealing from family members to fund one's drug habit, and even homelessness.

HB1246 should not be passed.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:56:41 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aimee Donzis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to HB1246

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to HB1246. While the bill aims to support infrastructure development, it lacks critical protections and commitments to Hawaiian and local farmers, small businesses, and social equity applicants within the cannabis industry. The current language fails to ensure that the benefits of this legislation will be equitably distributed, leaving too much room for outside interests to dominate the market.

Key Concerns:

- No Clear Social Equity Protections – The bill does not establish safeguards to prioritize local farmers and small businesses, opening the door for larger, external entities to take control.
- Deferred Decision-Making – Instead of securing these protections now, the bill leaves crucial details to be figured out later, which historically leads to loopholes that disadvantage local stakeholders.
- Difficult to Amend After Passage – Once a bill becomes law, making meaningful changes is far more challenging. This bill should be fully developed with community input before passage, not left open-ended for adjustments later.

Request to the Committee:

I urge you not to pass this bill in its current form. Instead, take the time to work with local farmers, small businesses, and community stakeholders to draft a truly community-derived bill—one that guarantees equitable access, protects Hawai‘i’s local industry, and prevents outside manipulation of the market. This issue is too important to rush through without these necessary safeguards.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Aimee Donzis

aimeedonzis@gmail.com

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:57:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Simmons	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair David Tarnes, Chair Kristin Kahaloa, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe and Vice Chair Matthias,
My name is Andrew Simmons and I am commenting on HB1246 relating to relating to cannabis. I appreciate your time regarding this important issue!

I have been a resident of Hawai‘i Island for 10 plus years and have been publicly vocal about cannabis law reform for the last 26 years.

Cannabis prohibition is rooted in racism and corporate profits prioritized over the health of our earth and our people. I would like you to remember this is about righting a wrong and not about overregulating a "dangerous plant"! Cannabis is one of if not the most versatile plants on the planet! Cannabis or Carrot I was born with a naturally inherited right to plant them both and provide for myself and family.

If an individual or business is selling cannabis to the public there does need to be some oversight and regulation to ensure public safety just like any other consumer product. It however should not be overly regulated and taxed!

Over regulation and taxation creates a system set up to only allow those with deep pockets to enter the legal market. If you want to get rid of the " Black Market " it needs to be reasonable for those operating in it currently to go legal. Taxes collected should go towards programs for our keiki, mental health, harm reduction and subsidized Healthcare for every single farmer across Hawai‘i!

Give Native Hawaiians and those directly and indirectly effected by the war on cannabis prioritized licenses!

Allow Micro license with direct to consumer sales. Do not allow middlemen brokers! Brokers take a huge cut of profits from the farmer and also leave too much room for Cannabis to be backdoored out of the larger licensed grows like we see currently in California. Large operators can operate at a loss for years and squeeze out small farmers!

I would encourage you to allow consumption lounges to provide a legal and safe space for those who wish to partake.. Consumption lounges eliminate alot of issues with cannabis smoke in our

public places. Hotel rooms, public parks, beaches etc. are all currently places it's common to see and smell cannabis smoke.

Thank you for your time, Andrew Simmons

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:59:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Willweber	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha legislators,

vote yes IF you are for breakdown of ohana, destruction of our keiki, psychosis, job and driving hazards.

Please vote NO if you are for the opposite. I SAY VOTE NO. mahalo

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:00:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert C. Anderson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill does not consider the input of Medical patients.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:18:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and Members of the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee and the Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

I OPPOSE HB1246 - RELATING TO CANNABIS. It establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office (HCHO) within the DCCA to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant. Beginning 1/1/2026, legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis. Establishes taxes on the retail sale of adult-use cannabis and the sale of medical cannabis. Adds new traffic offenses relating to the consumption or possession of marijuana or marijuana concentrate. Makes conforming amendments related to the legalization of personal adult use of cannabis. Beginning 1/1/2026, it decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate. Transfers the personnel and assets of the DOH and assets of the DOA relating to cannabis to the HCHO. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. It also appropriates funds.

HRS, chapter 329 already established legal operational guidelines for medical cannabis dispensaries and usage of medically necessary marijuana for authorized medical purposes. That is proper and sufficient.

But, social and recreational usage of marijuana contributes to negative health impacts, slow and impaired responses, an increase in criminal activities, drug-impaired driving, etc. The list on negative impacts is too long. Also, it's not worth the "revenue" it's supposed raise or the travesty it will cause. I won't be surprised when those revenues are substantially insufficient to address the increased need for new and more health, social, education, economical, etc. services and support - all due to HB1249. Hewa!

I oppose HB1246 and ask you to defer, better yet kill it, in committee.

Mahalo,

Kapua Keliikoa-Kamai

Concerned Wai'anae Kanaka

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:20:12 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Antya Miller	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Judicial and Agriculture Committees:

I am a strong advocate of agriculture and serve on the North Shore Neighborhood Board's Ag Committee. However, I am testifying as an individual.

We already have legal medical marijuana use in Hawaii, even though it is not legal under federal law. There is evidence that the drug is useful for certain medical conditions such as epilepsy.

We do NOT need another recreational drug. Alcohol and cigarettes are already legal and there are high health costs to our society for those drugs. I have seen first hand in my family where marijuana led to drug use of harder drugs. So, I strongly believe that it IS a gateway drug.

I believe that marijuana legalization is analogous to the broken window theory. If you ignore or allow the little stuff to go unchecked, it only leads to more serious criminal behavior, or in this case, harder drug use. We need less recreational drug use in our society, not more! And we don't need to jail peopl, they can be sent to private drug rehab facilities instead.

Many state governments have completely legalized marijuans so they could collect more tax revenues. This is extremely unethical and short-sighted for legislators to support such legislation.

Please vote NO on further legalization of marijuana and more State employees who will add to the tax burden of our state, the highest in the country before recent reductions in taxes.

Mahalo,,

Antya Miller

59-661 Alapio Road

Haleiwa 96712

808-342-8557

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:25:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Stensrud	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I am writing in support of HB1246. Cannabis is safer than both alcohol and tobacco. Unlike tobacco, there is little evidence that cannabis presents a danger to users. Unlike alcohol users, who tend to lose their inhibitions and often do things in a more reckless manner, such as driving, cannabis tends to make users more careful.

additionally, as other states have shown, legalizing cannabis so it is bought via regulated shops makes it more difficult for minors to purchase since regulated markets require ID to purchase and legal markets tend to reduce the black market options that people used prior to legalization. People buying from licensed shops will not be buying from dealers who are selling other, harder drugs.

This bill is also an excellent opportunity for Hawaiian agriculture, to eventually sell Hawaiian hemp and cannabis to other states and even countries.

2/3/2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to HB1246 and all efforts to legalize and commercialize cannabis in the State of Hawaii. This is my personal opinion as a private citizen, informed by my work as a psychiatrist in training in Honolulu.

My greatest concern with legalization and commercialization of marijuana is the risk to keiki. Marijuana has deleterious effects on the developing brain. While legalization efforts may primarily target adults, the reality is that such shifts can inadvertently shape adolescent perceptions and behaviors. Research consistently shows that marijuana legalization correlates with decreased adolescent perception of harm, increased use among caregivers, and greater accessibility for youth—factors that, in turn, predict increased adolescent marijuana use and its associated risks (Cerdá et al., 2017; Kosterman et al., 2016; Committee on Substance Abuse, 2015).

While I acknowledge that certain cannabis-derived compounds may hold therapeutic promise if administered in a controlled, evidence-based manner (Whiting et al., 2015), the broader narrative of marijuana legalization often overshadows the risks to young people. The evidence is clear: one in six adolescent users develops cannabis use disorder, a condition characterized by tolerance, withdrawal, and persistent use despite harmful consequences (Hasin et al., 2013; Volkow et al., 2014). Furthermore, the increasing potency of marijuana due to selective breeding heightens its addictive potential and cognitive risks (ElSohly et al., 2016).

One of the most important consequences of this use is the development of cannabis-induced psychosis in both adults and children. Studies have demonstrated this association repeatedly. For instance, in Colorado, there has been a positive association between the number of cannabis dispensaries and rates of emergency department visits for psychosis (Wang et al., 2022). Adolescent cannabis exposure predicts up to a twofold increase in the risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia in adulthood (Levine et al., 2017). In an even larger dataset, rates of schizophrenia attributable to cannabis have increased three- to fourfold over the past 20 years among seven million people in Denmark. This is thought to be due to increases in THC potency over that period (Hjorthoj et al., 2021). This association is highly variable based on underlying genetic risk—something nobody learns of until it is too late.

In Hawaii, marijuana use disproportionately affects our vulnerable populations. According to a study analyzing data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the prevalence of marijuana use among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) adolescents is notably higher compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, NHPI students reported a higher prevalence of substance use, including marijuana, with rates of current use reaching up to 31.5% including alcohol and marijuana use (Swaminath et al., 2023). Another study focusing on low-income NHPI adolescents found that positive academic attitudes were associated with lower rates of marijuana use (Huang et al., 2022). Additionally, a study examining ethnic variations in substance use among adolescents in Hawaii reported that Native Hawaiian adolescents had higher rates of lifetime and current substance use compared to their Asian/Pacific Islander and Caucasian peers (Ramisetty-Mikler et al., 2004). These findings highlight the significance of

marijuana use among NHPI adolescents in Hawaii: an already vulnerable population that would bear greater health burden should marijuana be legalized.

Beyond statistics, I have observed and treated patients and their families whose lives have been destroyed by cannabis. I urge you to consider this testimony and the disastrous health consequences of marijuana legalization.

Sincerely,

Kyung Moo Kim, MD
Psychiatry Resident, PGY-1, University of Hawaii Residency Programs

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HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:44:20 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edith Garcia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Edith, and I am writing in strong support of **HB1246**, which would legalize adult-use cannabis, establish regulatory oversight, and ensure that veterans and others in need have access to this natural medicine.

As a veteran, I have experienced firsthand the failures of the VA and the healthcare system when it comes to adequately addressing my health needs. When I became sick, I was neglected by the system that was supposed to support me. Conventional treatments either failed me or came with severe side effects, leaving me without viable options. It was through cannabis that I found relief—relief that eased both my physical and mental suffering.

Cannabis helped me manage my pain, reduced the nausea that came with it, and restored my appetite when I was rapidly losing weight. It became a crucial part of my healing process when no other treatments worked. **As a veteran who has served my country, I should have the freedom to choose the medication that best supports my health and well-being.** The fact that cannabis remains restricted while many harmful pharmaceuticals are easily prescribed is unjust and out of step with both medical research and the experiences of countless patients.

Legalizing adult-use cannabis and establishing a regulated system will ensure **safe access, consumer protection, economic benefits for our state, and the elimination of outdated criminal penalties** that have disproportionately harmed vulnerable communities. Hawai‘i has the opportunity to lead with compassion, recognizing cannabis not as a criminal offense but as a legitimate option for those who need it.

I urge you to support HB1246 for the sake of **patients, veterans, and all individuals who deserve the right to choose a natural and effective alternative for their health.**

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:06:01 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Arnold Rabin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the legalization of recreational marijuana .

I am a former drug counselor. I testify marijuana is safe and harmless. Contrary to myth it is not a Gateway Drug

I believe equalization will cut down on use of alcohol

I also believe that tax revenue from the sale can be used to improve our infrastructure and educational system.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:17:23 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abbey Seitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Abbey Seitz, and I live in Palolo, on the island of O‘ahu. I’m testifying **in support of H.B. 1246** to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. They are not an effective use of taxpayer dollars. They also perpetuate racial disparities in our criminal legal system and incarcerate people unnecessarily in our overcrowded jails and prisons. By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawai‘i can raise millions of dollars for true public safety programs, such as youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:52:07 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noah Brustin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it is common sense.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:52:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marion Logan	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Issue not Legalization but Commercialization of THC

Dear members of the committee, I stand in opposition. I want to emphasize that supporting this bill reverses the work that you all have done to alleviate homelessness, work on mental health, and protection for Hawaii's youth. Legalization of cannabis will streamline marketing, markets to youth. We have not solved vaping for middle school kids.

I want to emphasize that the main goal for commercialization is the mass production of the active ingredient THC. We will be mass producing a product with an extreme potency of THC products upwards of 90% concentrate. Why is this even accessible?

In Colorado, there are more Marijuana stores than McDonalds and Starbucks combined. Do we want more of this?! Is this the what we want Hawaii to be known for?

In legalized states, marijuana stores are highly concentrated in economically disadvantaged communities. We are working to help our communities and not hurt our communities.

The social costs will cost the state while lining the pockets of wealthy landowners. We all know how much Hawaii loves how wealthy landowners have subjugated the population for over a couple hundred years.

What is the rush? At the very least, let us wait on a federal program that 1) determines public safe amount of thc for the public (like alcohol). 2) regulates thc in the same manner as alcohol and tobacco.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 4:59:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimmy Achuara	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Opposition to HB1246 Legalization of Recreational Marijuana

Dear Esteemed Members of the Hawaii State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB1246, which seeks to legalize the recreational use of marijuana in Hawaii. While I understand the economic and regulatory arguments in favor of legalization, I believe the risks and consequences far outweigh any potential benefits.

Legalizing recreational cannabis raises significant public health, safety, and societal concerns, including:

1. **Impact on Public Health** Studies have shown that regular marijuana use, especially among young people, can negatively affect brain development, cognitive function, and mental health. Increased access will inevitably lead to higher rates of dependency, addiction, and impaired decision-making.
2. **Safety Risks on Our Roads and Workplaces** Unlike alcohol, cannabis impairment is difficult to measure accurately. States that have legalized marijuana have seen a sharp increase in traffic accidents, fatalities, and workplace incidents related to impaired judgment. Public safety must be a top priority.
3. **Negative Effects on Our Keiki (Children & Youth)** Despite age restrictions, legalizing recreational cannabis will make it more accessible to minors. Other states that have legalized marijuana have seen a rise in adolescent use, which has lifelong consequences on education, ambition, and mental well-being.
4. **Social and Economic Consequences** while proponents argue that taxation will bring revenue to the state, this does not account for increased healthcare costs, addiction treatment expenses, law enforcement challenges, and productivity losses due to impairment in the workplace.

Hawaii is unique, with a deep cultural and spiritual connection to Āina and ohana. We should focus on uplifting our communities with policies that promote well-being, responsibility, and health, rather than introducing substances that have the potential to harm future generations.

I strongly urge you to reject HB1246 and instead prioritize initiatives that strengthen families, protect public safety, and promote a drug-free future for Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and service to our great state. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these concerns and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Achuara

choose.love.choose.joy@gmail.com

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:00:47 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaipo Hanakahi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1246 with Amendments

Presented by Kaipo K. Hanakahi

On Behalf of a Hawaiian Traditional Farming Legacy (Est. 1790)

Aloha Chair David Tarnas, Chair Kristin Kahaloe, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair Matthias, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kaipo K. Hanakahi, and I stand before you as a steward of a Hawaiian farming legacy that has nourished these islands for over 230 years. Today, I urge you to amend HB1246 to ensure Hawaii's cannabis industry becomes a beacon of equity, sustainability, and justice for all our people-while safeguarding our youth.

Regulating Cannabis Protects Our Youth

As Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, testified in 2022: "Legalization of marijuana in some states has not been associated with an increase in adolescents' marijuana use." The data proves it:

- Teen cannabis use has declined as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- The University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey shows significant drops in past 30-day marijuana use among high schoolers:
 - 8th graders: 11% (2011) decreased to 6% (2023)

- 10th graders: 25% decreased to 15%
- 12th graders: 33% decreased to 20%
- In 19 of 21 states with legalization, government surveys reported decreased high school cannabis use post-legalization.
- Regulation works: Legal retailers check IDs. Government stings show over 90% compliance with age restrictions, unlike illicit dealers who sell to anyone.
- Safer products: Illegal cannabis is often contaminated with pesticides, heavy metals, or even dangerous drugs like fentanyl. Regulated products are lab-tested, labeled, and sold in child-proof packaging.

HB1246's framework will protect Hawaii's youth by replacing prohibition with common-sense safeguards and redirecting tax revenue to programs that uplift them.

Fixing a Broken System & Addressing Tourism Misconceptions

Hawaii's medical cannabis market is failing because the initial dispensary licensing process excluded Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Pacific Islanders, and other local minorities. This lack of economic diversity has led to high prices, limited access, and a thriving black market. Without equity-driven reforms, full legalization will repeat these mistakes.

Opponents of legalization, including Steven Alm and Mayor Blangiardi, have used Japanese tourism as a reason to reject adult-use cannabis. However, data from the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) tells a different story.

In 2023, 589,000 visitors came from Japan, a country with strict anti-cannabis laws. Meanwhile, over 7 million visitors arrived from regions where adult-use cannabis is already legal, including:

- 5 million from the U.S. West, where California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington have thriving adult-use markets.
- 2.4 million from the U.S. East, including visitors from New York, Massachusetts, and other legalized states.

- 474,000 from Canada, where cannabis has been federally legal since 2018.
- 236,000 from Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand, both of which have regions with legalized cannabis.

The reality is that most of our tourists already come from places where cannabis is legal. Prohibition does nothing to "protect" tourism; it only strengthens the black market while preventing Hawaii from benefiting from a well-regulated, tax-generating industry.

1. Reserve the First 200 Licenses for Local Minority Groups (3-5 Year Lockout)

To prevent the mistakes of Hawaii's past-where outside interests monopolized industries like sugar and tourism-we demand the first 200 cannabis licenses be reserved for local minority groups, including Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Pacific Islanders, Asian communities, and other historically underserved populations. This ensures foundational wealth stays with communities historically excluded from economic power.

2. Invest Cannabis Tax Revenue in Youth and Communities

HB1246 will direct cannabis tax revenue to:

- **Social Equity Grant Program:** Fund childcare, after-school programs, youth resiliency initiatives, and substance abuse prevention.
- **Public Health and Education:** Expand summer programs, recreational centers, housing, and counseling services for youth.
- **Local Farmers:** Support regenerative agriculture, medicinal cannabis research, and farm-to-school programs to strengthen food security.

This reinvestment cycle ensures the industry heals-not harms-our communities.

3. Prioritize Safe Consumption Lounges for Residents and 10 Million Visitors

Hawaii's 10 million annual visitors represent a \$50-100 million annual tax opportunity through regulated consumption lounges. These locally owned spaces will:

- Create jobs in hospitality, security, and retail.

- Offer tourists a legal, safe alternative to unregulated use, aligning with mālama 'āina (care for the land).
- Reduce reliance on volatile markets while catering to the majority of visitors who come from regions where cannabis is already legal.

4. Center Science and Equity in Policy Design

HB1246 must mandate:

- Peer-reviewed research to guide health and safety regulations (modeled after Massachusetts' framework).
- Advisory boards with reserved seats for Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Pacific Islanders, Asian communities, and other marginalized groups.
- Automatic expungement for past cannabis convictions and equity licenses for impacted families.

5. Build a Legacy of Local Ownership

Without these amendments, Hawaii risks repeating the failures of California and Nevada, where corporations pushed out small farmers. Let Hawaii's cannabis industry be one where:

- Hawaiian families, Filipino entrepreneurs, Pacific Islanders, and other local minority groups cultivate sustainably.
- Tax dollars fund schools-not prisons.

Conclusion: A Better Path Forward

Hawaii's economic future should not be dictated by outdated fears. The data is clear: legalization will not harm tourism, but prohibition continues to harm local communities. Prohibition has derailed lives and failed our youth. Regulation, coupled with investments in their future, is the

wiser path. As the olelo no‘eau teaches: "I ka wā ma mua, ka wā ma hope" the future is in the past. Let us honor our ancestors' wisdom by planting seeds of justice today.

Amend HB1246 to lock out corporate exploitation, lock in local ownership, and protect Hawaii's keiki.

Mahalo nui loa for your courage and commitment to a Hawaii that works for all its people.

Kaipo K. Hanakahi

Hawaiian Traditional Farmer | Advocate for Economic Justice

Sources Cited:

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2. CDC High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1991-2023).
3. University of Michigan Monitoring the Future Survey (1975-2024).
4. Berg et al., Addictive Behaviors (2023).
5. MPP, "Adult-Use Cannabis Legalization Corresponds with Drops in Teen Use" (2025).
6. DBEDT 2023 Annual Visitor Research Report.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:03:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Drew Erickson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Key Issues with §A-11: Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office

The establishment of the **Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office** under §A-11 presents **several problematic structural and governance concerns**, which could negatively impact the equitable development of the cannabis industry in Hawai‘i.

1. Lack of Independence and Local Representation

- The office is **placed within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA)** but operates **without direct oversight**, creating a **gray area in accountability**.
- There is **no requirement** for local farmers, small businesses, or community stakeholders to have a voice in the office's decisions.
- The structure **centralizes control under a single administrator**, rather than ensuring **community-driven oversight** through a coalition or board with diverse representation.

2. Governor-Appointed Administrator with No Fixed Term

- The **administrator is appointed solely by the governor** and serves **at the governor’s pleasure**, meaning there is **no long-term stability or independent governance**.
- The term of the administrator is **coterminous with the governor's term**, which means **every new administration could completely change leadership**, creating **uncertainty** and potential political influence over industry regulation.
- There are **no checks and balances** to ensure that the administrator acts in the best interest of **Hawai‘i’s farmers, small businesses, or social equity applicants**.

3. No Clear Commitment to Social Equity or Local Farmers

- Unlike the **Hawai‘i Cannabis Coalition (THCC) proposal**, which includes **representatives from local growers, dispensaries, Native Hawaiian organizations, legal professionals, and financial experts**, this bill does not establish **any structured community input**.

- Without **specific mandates** for **prioritizing local farmers and social equity applicants**, the office could **favor large corporations or outside interests** rather than fostering a **locally controlled, community-driven industry**.
-

Proposed Alternative: The Hawaii Cannabis Coalition (THCC)

To address these concerns and ensure equitable industry development, the Hawai‘i Cannabis Coalition (THCC) should be established under the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT) as a semi-autonomous body with dedicated staff and budget.

Composition of the Coalition

The THCC shall consist of the following representatives:

- **Two Representatives from the State Legislature** – Nominated by legislative leadership.
- **Two Representatives from Licensed Dispensaries** – Nominated by the dispensary community.
- **Two Representatives from the Cannabis Growers Community** – Nominated by recognized growers’ associations.
- **Two Representatives from the Native Hawaiian Community** – Nominated by Hawaiian cultural and community organizations.
- **Two Representatives from the Legal Community** – Nominated by legal professionals specializing in cannabis-related law.
- **Two Representatives from the Financial Sector** – Nominated by financial institutions or experts involved in cannabis finance.

Leadership Structure

- **Chairperson:** Facilitates meetings and serves as the official spokesperson but does not hold voting rights. This role is nominated by the group that selects the Native Hawaiian representatives and requires unanimous confirmation by the Coalition.
- **Arbitrator:** An independent arbitrator, elected by the Coalition, will serve as the **tie-breaking vote** in instances of decision-making deadlock.

Selection Process

- Each group listed above shall **nominate its representatives** through its own forum or association in accordance with internal protocols.
- The nomination process shall **prioritize unity within factions** to ensure **cohesive and representative perspectives**.

- The Coalition must confirm appointed members to ensure **compliance with eligibility criteria and alignment with the Coalition’s mission.**
-

Conclusion & Recommendation

§A-11 centralizes too much power in a single, politically appointed administrator and lacks mechanisms to ensure equitable participation from Hawai‘i’s local farmers, small businesses, and social equity applicants.

Instead, the bill should **establish a coalition-based oversight model**—such as the **Hawai‘i Cannabis Coalition (THCC)**—to ensure **fair, transparent, and community-driven governance.**

Request to Lawmakers:

Reject the current structure in §A-11 and replace it with a more inclusive, locally representative framework that prioritizes Hawai‘i’s small farmers, businesses, and social equity applicants. **This issue is too important to be left in the hands of a single administrator with unchecked authority.**

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:22:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dalene McCormick	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose moving forward with this bill.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 5:25:02 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is time we finally close the book on the nonsense crusade of criminalizing Marijuana and Cannabis. For decades, we have seen that Marijuana is no more dangerous, Alcohol and Tobacco, if not more so. Alcohol, for example, has the highest mortality rate for those trying to recover from the substance. Now, Marijuana isn't perfect; most scientists agree that Minors shouldn't smoke it, and high levels of THC in more powerful strains should regulated and watched. But this unnecessary fear-mongering over this plant has to stop. All we are doing is embarrassing ourselves by repeating decades-old lies and propping up racist laws that have done more and continue to harm marginalized communities. So I support this bill not only because it will regulate the sale and the growth of all aspects of the Cannabis plant, but it will also allow the state to profit from future sales and usage from parts of the plant, not just the flower. If this bill moves forward, I would like to add a stipulation that if this bill becomes law, then we should pardon, exonerate, and expunge the records of everyone in the state who was arrested for any cannabis-related charges. I support this bill, and if you truly represent the people, then you should, too.

Empress Modupe Olufunmi-Jacobs
Puna, Hawaii Constituent & Resident
Ganja War Veteran

February 3rd, 2025

House Committees JHA & AG
Hawaii, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii

Greetings to the Honorable members of the House & Committee Members. Below is my statement regarding HB1246. While it was a statement made in public and social media. I am at this last minute stating it to this committee. My reasons for Opposing HB1246 are as follows.

@bigislandgrownhawaii ! @noabotanicals, and all who support HB 1246. I disagree and oppose this bill HB1246 for all the reasons I stated to former House Member Cedric Gates and Jackie in conversation. We can respectfully agree to disagree. However! This bill will only benefit the current medical licencees, as well as opens up the way for MSO's to gain more control of Hawaii's Cannabis industry. While excluding a large segment of Hawaii's population of craft farmers, cultural practitioners, cannabis collectives, medical cannabis patients and individuals who simply want their Divine and Human Rights to this plant. I along with several of my Women in Cannabis SiStahs @lolo_pakalolo @msswissmix suggested there be changes in the language in the bill. Mine was that the bill should be reduced to less than the over 350 pages of redundancy. And give the people of Hawaii a shorter version of the bill. One that will address among other omissions in the bill. A sustainable and viable Reparatory & Restorative measures, that would address the irreparable damage done during "Green Harvest" , Hawaii's "War on Drugs". To families and individuals criminalized, marginalized and now excluded from participating equitably in this "Legal. Cannabis" industry. Since only those current licencees and business would greatly profit from the passing of HB1246 as it is. I urge you the committee members to review and revise it again. Further I urge you to not rely only on the testimony of those that stand to profit more from an economic standpoint, than those who have a genuine cultural, spiritual and historical connection with the plant cannabis. Why be satisfied with short term gratification with long term consequences?

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 6:26:19 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Ward	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Representatives Tarnas, Poepoe, Kahaloa, Kusch, and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs, and Committee of Agriculture and Food Systems:

I am standing in opposition to HB1246, proposing to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant, including the legalization of adult recreational use.

I join my fellow concerned community members to strongly urge you not to pass this bill, which blatantly prioritizes the economic and commercial interests of marijuana (growers, manufacturers, distributors, etc.) over the health and safety of our communities, and our youth.

No amount of regulation will ensure that youth will not find access to this drug, and become addicted to cannabis in greater numbers than already is illegally used. It poses a significant threat to their physical and mental health and will have impacts to their studies, families, and behavior in our communities, i.e. impaired driving as one example. How could our law enforcement possibly pre-empt dangerous impaired behavior?

Recognized, credible studies of regular marijuana use have demonstrated significant physical and mental impairment of cannabis users, especially over long-term use.

Legalized use of marijuana as a "recreational" drug will create widespread numbers of impaired persons driving, working, operating heavy machinery, and possible mental disorientation by some in any number of places in our communities.

Do we want "stoned" people in our airplanes, buses, workplaces? Further, I am concerned about this portion of HB1246, which states:

“§A-5 Limitations; construction with other laws. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to:
5) Require any person, corporation, or any other entity that occupies, owns, or controls real property to allow the consumption, cultivation, processing, display, distribution, or dispensing of cannabis on or within that property; provided that in the case of the rental of a residential dwelling, a landlord shall not prohibit the possession of cannabis or the consumption of cannabis that is not inhaled..”

I live in a City-owned apartment building in Chinatown which has a non-smoking policy. They recently issued a reminder to residents that there have been complaints about cigarettes and marijuana being smoked, and the odors are being wafted into neighboring units. Am I to

understand that our building managers will not be able, under this proposed legislation, to prohibit smoking marijuana and thereby affecting the very air I breathe?

The fact is, that marijuana has long been recognized as a mind-altering substance, whose quantitative use and consequences cannot be controlled, should be sufficient warning to you, our elected officials, to not add further elements to the stew of troubles our state is already facing.

I quote from an op-ed by Hilton Raethel,

“One salient question to ask is whether legalizing recreational marijuana will have a net positive or negative effect in our communities. Will it increase test scores for students, reduce homelessness, increase productivity at work, or increase health and wellness in our communities?”

If we are unsure as to the net benefit to our community were we to legalize recreational marijuana, then maybe what we have — access to medical cannabis as needed, and the decriminalization of personal amounts of cannabis — is good enough.”

Mahalo for your stern and clear-minded weighing of the avaricious versus the protective motives of your constituents. Please give serious consideration to the documented negative physical and mental health impacts of cannabis on our citizens, and act on what's best for Hawaii and not on the potential revenue. We need to look at the issue through the lens of safety and caution and not the greed of potential income to our State. “Ua mau ke ea o la aina i ka pono. The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness.”

Deborah Ward
901 River St.
Honolulu, HI 96817

Some references:

“5 recent scientific findings that change what we know about cannabis.”

National Geographic, December 19, 2024

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/what-we-know-about-cannabis-new-research>

“Cannabis Use Linked to Epigenetic Changes, Study Shows.” September 3, 2024

<https://www.sciencealert.com/cannabis-use-linked-to-epigenetic-changes-study-shows>

“Frequent marijuana users tend to be leaner and less likely to develop diabetes. But the pseudo-health benefits come at a price, experts say.” June 3, 2023

https://fortune.com/well/2023/06/03/mairjuana-users-leaner-less-likely-develop-diabetes-metabolic-cognitive-issues-attention/#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=16859314895933&csi=1&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&share=https%3A%2F%2Ffortune.com%2Fwell%2F2023%2F06%2F03%2Fmairjuana-users-leaner-less-likely-develop-diabetes-metabolic-cognitive-issues-attention%2F

“Do you smoke weed recreationally? Here's what experts want you to know.”

National Geographic March 22, 2024

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/premium/article/cannabis-downsides-mental-illness-heart-disease?loggedin=true&rnd=1738631481136>

“Is marijuana good for our community?”

By Hilton R. Raethel, M.P.H., M.H.A., CEO of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii.

Star-Advertiser April 7, 2024;E3

<https://printreplica.staradvertiser.com?selDate=20240407&goTo=E03&artid=0&editionStart=Honolulu%20Star-Advertiser>

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 6:53:22 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gail H. Kuba	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a retired teacher of Public and Private Schools, I want to oppose HB1246 Recreational Marijuana! It is a very Grave move for Social, Economic, Health and Safety of the Communities of Hawai'i. Besides being a gateway drug leading to harder drugs for children of all ages, there are long term detrimental and often incurable health issues as a consequence. Please, Please, Please for the sake of our Children, the future of Hawai'i, OPPOSE HB1246. Mahalo nui loa!!

Aloha e Ke Akua,

G. Kuba

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:02:27 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aprill Wilson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I absolutely oppose legalizing any form of cannabis/marijuana/palalolo in any amount for recreational purposes.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:09:48 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
james wallace	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I oppose HB 1246. We have better priorities than turning hawaii people into potheads. Seems there is no interest into bettering our Keikis in hawaii. Money is not worth the future of our Keikis. You see how I mentioned Keikis twice to get it into your head that Keikis come first. We cannot afford to turn them into future druggies. Please tell them Pakalolo Lobbist to SHOVE IT and get out of hawaii. We are a Aloha State not Pakalolo State. Lolo means stupid. Keep drugs off our street and off our island!!! Just Say No!!!! Don't forget that slogan.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:11:59 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
christina n braddock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of HB1246

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB1246 as a trauma nurse, former military service member, and integrative nurse practitioner with extensive experience treating post-traumatic stress (PTS), traumatic brain injuries, and chronic pain. My work with Hawaii’s veterans, first responders, Maui fire survivors, and North Shore residents has reinforced my belief in the urgent need for expanded access to medical cannabis as a therapeutic option for those suffering from debilitating conditions.

Cannabis has proven to be a safe and effective alternative treatment for a wide range of conditions, including but not limited to:

- Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS)
- Chronic Pain
- Anxiety Disorders
- Insomnia and Sleep Disturbances
- Cancer-related Symptoms (nausea, pain, appetite loss)
- Neuropathic Pain
- Epilepsy and Seizure Disorders
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Autoimmune Conditions
- Inflammatory Disorders

As a healthcare provider, I have seen firsthand how conventional pharmaceuticals, including opioids and benzodiazepines, can lead to dependency, significant side effects, and a reduced quality of life for patients. In contrast, medical cannabis offers a plant-based, holistic alternative that is not only effective but also cost-efficient in the long term. For many, it has been a life-changing remedy that has allowed them to regain functionality, improve sleep, and reduce pain without the risk of overdose or addiction.

Beyond individual patient care, HB1246 is a crucial step in addressing the broader public health crisis in Hawaii. We are currently facing an unprecedented mental health and homelessness epidemic. According to recent data:

- Hawaii has one of the highest per capita rates of homelessness in the nation, with an estimated 6,000 individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night.
- More than **25%** of homeless individuals in Hawaii suffer from severe mental illness or substance use disorders.
- Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among veterans and first responders, with **an average of 17-22 veterans dying by suicide each day in the U.S.**
- Chronic pain and untreated trauma are among the leading contributors to substance abuse, unemployment, and housing instability.

As a public health professional, I strongly advocate for increased access to alternative and holistic therapies that not only provide effective treatment but also reduce healthcare costs and lessen the burden on our already strained mental health system. Studies have consistently shown that states with legalized medical cannabis programs experience reductions in opioid overdose deaths, prescription drug dependency, and overall healthcare expenditures. Hawaii should continue to be at the forefront of progressive healthcare solutions that put the well-being of our communities first.

By passing HB1246, we will ensure that those who need medical cannabis for relief—our veterans, first responders, cancer patients, trauma survivors, and local residents—can access it safely and affordably. We must empower more medical practitioners to offer these therapies as part of an integrative and patient-centered approach to healing.

For the sake of public health, community well-being, and our most vulnerable populations, I urge you to pass HB1246. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

With Gratitude & Integrity,

Christina N. Braddock, APRN, MSN, CEN, CPTR, FNP-BC
Integrative Family Nurse Practitioner
Mana Warrior Collective

email- Manawarriorhealth@gmail.com

cell- 808-212-9922

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:14:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
TERI SAVAIINAEA	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas and Committee Members,

My name is Teri Kia Savaiinaea, and I am a resident of Wai‘anae, where I have lived and served my community for 26 years. I am submitting testimony in **opposition** to HB 1246, which seeks to legalize recreational marijuana in Hawai‘i. While I support efforts to reform outdated drug policies, I have serious concerns about how full legalization would impact my community, particularly in terms of public safety, youth development, community health, and economic equity.

Public Safety Concerns

Legalization will likely increase impaired driving incidents, creating new dangers on our roads and posing risks to families, kūpuna, and pedestrians. Additionally, enforcement challenges remain—Wai‘anae and other rural communities already struggle with illegal cannabis operations, and full legalization could complicate regulatory efforts rather than resolve them.

Impact on Youth & Education

Our schools already face challenges with youth substance abuse. Studies have linked early marijuana use to lower academic performance and cognitive impairment, which could further disadvantage our keiki in under-resourced schools. Without stronger youth prevention programs and educational safeguards, legalization may do more harm than good.

Community Health & Well-being

Mental health and substance abuse services in my district are already stretched thin. Studies have shown that cannabis use can contribute to increased addiction rates, psychosis, and other mental health disorders. Given that Wai‘anae has some of the highest rates of health disparities in the state, legalizing marijuana without significant investments in treatment and prevention programs is irresponsible.

Cultural & Economic Equity Considerations

Many kūpuna and community leaders have raised concerns about the impact of commercial marijuana on our cultural values and economic sovereignty. Large corporations, rather than local farmers, are most likely to benefit from legalization, mirroring the same systemic inequities that have historically disadvantaged Native Hawaiians. Additionally, the bill does not go far enough in addressing the expungement of past marijuana-related convictions, which disproportionately affect Native Hawaiians and other marginalized communities.

A Better Path Forward

We should be investing in community-based drug education and mental health services. Any policy changes should prioritize public health, economic fairness, and local community voices.

For these reasons, I strongly **oppose** HB 1246 and urge this committee to reconsider its approach.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Teri Kia Savaiinaea
District 45, Wai‘anae resident

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:32:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elsworth kaanaana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB1246 with Amendments

Presented by Kalei Kaanaana

On behalf of legacy farmers and Kanaka Maoli practitioners of Lā‘au Lapa‘au

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Matthias, and Committee Members,

My name is Kaleialoha Kaanaana. I am a legacy farmer and nonprofit owner of Kuleana Ka ‘Āina. I urge you to amend HB1246 to create a fair, sustainable cannabis industry that benefits local communities while protecting our youth.

Why Regulation Works

Teen cannabis use has decreased in states that have legalized it, proving that regulation is more effective than prohibition.

Legal retailers enforce ID checks—unlike illegal dealers who sell to anyone.

Lab-tested products are safer than unregulated cannabis, which may contain harmful substances.

Tax revenue from cannabis can fund youth programs and other community needs.

Fixing a Broken System

Hawai‘i’s current medical cannabis system has failed many local residents. High prices and limited access have fueled the black market. Legalization must not repeat these mistakes.

Some argue that legal cannabis will harm tourism, but data shows that most visitors already come from places where cannabis is legal. Prohibition only strengthens the black market and prevents Hawai‘i from benefiting from a well-regulated industry.

Key Amendments for a Fair Industry

1. Reserve Licenses for Local Communities

To prevent outside corporations from taking over, the first 200 licenses should be reserved for Native Hawaiian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, Asian, and other local minority groups for 3-5 years.

2. Invest Cannabis Taxes in Youth & Communities

Revenue should fund:

Childcare, after-school programs, and youth support services.

Public health, education, and housing programs.

Local farmers and research on medicinal cannabis.

3. Allow Safe Cannabis Lounges

Tourists and locals need legal spaces to consume cannabis. Regulated lounges will:

Create jobs in hospitality, security, and retail.

Reduce illegal use and protect public spaces.

Generate \$50–100 million in tax revenue annually.

4. Ensure Science and Equity Guide Policy

HB1246 should require:

Health and safety research to guide regulations.

Advisory boards with local and minority representation.

Expungement of past cannabis convictions to support affected families.

5. Keep the Industry Local

Without strong protections, large corporations will push out local farmers—just like in California and Nevada. Hawai‘i’s cannabis industry should:

Support Hawaiian and Filipino-owned businesses.

Encourage sustainable farming practices.

Use tax revenue for schools and community programs—not prisons.

Conclusion

Hawai‘i’s cannabis policy should be based on facts, not fear. Legalization will not harm tourism, but prohibition continues to harm local communities.

Amend HB1246 to:

- Protect local ownership
- Invest in youth and community programs

Create a fair and sustainable industry

Mahalo for your leadership and commitment to a better Hawai'i.

Kalei Kaanaana

Legacy Farmer | Cannabis Consultant | Kanaka Maoli

Sources for adolescent cannabis statistic by : Nora Volkow 2022 u.s. senate committee hearing.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:33:52 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandra Young	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in strong opposition to HB 1246. Too many lives will be adversely affected by this so-called recreational drug. Hawai'i already has serious substance abuse problems that have harmed/destroyed the lives of many people, keiki, families and third parties.

It can begin innocently at first. Some users become addicts and some progress to hard drugs. I am the victim of a crime committed by a drug addict, and have seen how substance abuse and drug addiction have harmed many families over the years within my practice. Sometimes the harm is permanent when someone with impaired judgment from drug use commits suicide. Please keep our keiki and people safe. Say "no" to HB1246. Thank you.

Aloha, Sandra Young

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 7:56:19 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Hashimoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose to legalizing marijuana.

Cannabis is damaging to brains, development and productivity. It is also a gateway drug.

In states where it is legalizied, crime increases and law enforcement is further burdened. Please listen to their caution against legalization.

Please vote no on HB 1246.

Thank you,

Kathleen Hashimoto

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 8:45:17 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mikela Kobayashi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha to our leaders of Hawaii,

First of all, mahalo nui loa for working diligently to serve the people of Hawaii.

I'm Mikela Kobayashi, I was born and raised here in the islands. I'm a native Hawaiian, a mom, and a youth worker. **I OPPOSE HB1246** regarding the the legalization of recreational marijuana.

Hawaii is a unique place built on aloha and ohana. Passing this bill however, will only create greater challenges for our children, families, and communities. On a personal level, recreational marijuana destroyed my family. My parents were just teenagers and young adults when they started using marijuana recreationally. Eventually their "harmless fun" led to a life of addiction, alcoholism, abuse, incarceration, neglect, separation, and loss of children. It deeply pains me to describe my family in this way because I know that my parents and family had so much potential, but got caught up in unhealthy patterns that led to destruction and loss. Now we are working very hard to restore what was lost. What pains me even more is knowing that many other families have very similar stories. I'm not blaming my family's issues on recreational marijuana, but I do believe that the culture behind it is dangerous and weakens people's abilities to make good choices.

Furthermore, as a Hawaiian I disagree with the phrase that marijuana is a part of our culture. Marijuana is an invasive species to our land and our people. In fact, the meaning of pakalolo reveals that our ancestors recognized the damaging outcomes of marijuana. "Paka" means tobacco and "lōlō" means paralyzed, numb, feeble-minded, and crazy. I would never want our people to be characterized in this way.

In addition to my personal reasons for opposing this bill, my other concerns include

1. Increased availability to youth and accidental ingestion or overdosing among youth
2. Increased strain on youth workers such as teachers, counselors, etc.
3. Increased health complications such as psychosis, anxiety, depression, lung cancer, etc.
4. Increased traffic accidents of drivers under the influence
5. Increased likelihood of using other illicit drugs
6. Lack of regulation
7. Lack of law enforcement resources

While I recognize that some may hope that legalizing marijuana might boost the economy, if our families and communities are suffering, our economy will ultimately continue to suffer as well.

Again I deeply appreciate the hard work that our government officials invest into our islands and thank you for reading this letter.

Aloha,

Mikela Kobayashi

To the Honorable Chair Tarnas, Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Poepoe, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs and Agriculture and Food Services Committees:

I ask you to strongly support HB1246 which allows legalization and regulation of cannabis in Hawaii.

This is well thought-out legislation that covers so many of the issues and concerns of legalization, and is shaped by learning from existing cannabis laws in other states.

The state will benefit from revenue generated by the legal sale of cannabis. It is a win-win.

Please give this Bill your full support.

Regards,

Terry Huth
Kihei, Maui

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:04:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Monica FLOREZ-ZENGER	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Vote no on HB1246. Cannabis is still a gateway drug. It effects are still dangerous. I have a sister that is 40 years clean a sober. It all started with smoking cannabis. We need to make it harder for people to get it, not easier.

We will turn into Colorado and Washington where people are smoking it everywhere. This is not common sense to legalize something that can destroy a persons future.

“No” to Recreational Marijuana

Aloha.

Thank you for your service to our beloved state of Hawai'i.

Please vote "NO to RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA!"

As a registered voter, please honor the wishes of our communities on behalf of our children and families and say "NO to Recreational Marijuana!" Our children, families, and communities are struggling with so many issues. We do not need something else to harm our children and families.

As a Grandpa and retired educator, please help us to protect our children. They face too many dangers and influences with social media and peers. It's heart wrenching to see students as young as the third grade trying to fit in by experiment with vaping. One-third of our students feel sad or hopeless. One-fifth say they purposely hurt themselves. We cannot say, "Kids will not have access to the recreational marijuana." They already have access to so many other detrimental situations. If government says, "It's recreational use, they will view it as it must be okay."

We cannot control Vaping, Drunk Driving, Sex Trafficking, and so many other challenges in our society. Please fix these other dangers and challenges in the lives of our kids before introducing another potential harm. They need our help, not more confusion! Please don't make this about finances and money. **Our children are priceless!**

As a citizen and community member, I have witnessed and experienced the consequences of marijuana as a gateway drug. Family members and friends have lost their lives, mental capacity, or have gone to prison. Many have the lost the ability to be a contributing member of our society. Many used marijuana before doing harder drugs. It's heartbreaking to think about the devastating potential of recreational marijuana.

"Please vote "NO!" to recreational marijuana use!"

Thank you for your service to our beloved state and communities.

We trust that you will do the right thing by voting "NO!" to recreational marijuana use.

Aloha

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:37:32 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katalika Kaiser	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please do not allow this bill to pass. I am concerned about especially about the awful smell that will increase in my neighborhood and public places. It smells like a skunk. Let's keep Hawaii smelling clean with clean air and fragrant flowers and plants.

Katalika Kaiser

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:41:06 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Tesoro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you for serving the State of Hawaii and for hearing my testimony.

Please vote "NO" to recreational marijuana.

HB1246

When people smoke marijuana they are impaired. I can't imagine my grandchildren being taught in school by teachers that are impaired and stoned out of their minds. This is not safe for the Keiki. Also, if a Pilot of an airline flight smokes before flying the plane, this would be dangerous. If a doctor is impaired by marijuana while doing a surgery, this is scary. If a nurse giving medicine to a patient in the hospital so happens to be stoned, they may not get the right medication. The what ifs are endless and very dangerous to the people of Hawaii. Please keep our Keiki and people of Hawaii safe by voting "NO" to HB1246.

Thank you for your time and again Mahalo for working for the people to make this a safe State to reside in.

Mahalo,

Amy Tesoro

2/3/2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to HB1246 and all efforts to legalize and commercialize cannabis in the State of Hawaii. This is my personal opinion as a private citizen, informed by my work as a psychiatrist in training in Honolulu, and by my review of the biomedical literature.

To begin, cannabis is not the same drug it was even some years ago. Over the past 50 years, the concentration of THC – the main psychoactive substance in cannabis – has increased approximately 10x. This potency is what drives its danger, particularly its effects on anxiety, insomnia, depression, and psychosis.

When regulations on cannabis are relaxed, overall use increases, and not just among those over the age of 21. Studies have found that less restrictive cannabis policy environments are associated with increased past month use among both adults and youth (Pessar et al. 2024). Looking at other states that have legalized Marijuana, specifically Colorado, we see that prevalence of Marijuana use has increased among youth which is concerning due to that population being at the highest risk of neurodevelopmental issues associated with Cannabis use (Hinckley et al. 2022). Cannabis use and cannabis use disorder have been associated with depression, anxiety, psychosis and earlier onset of mania in bipolar disorder patients compared to youth who do not use cannabis (Levine et al. 2017). Cannabis use has also been linked to overall decreased motivational states, lower overall relationship satisfaction and lower life satisfaction (Fergusson et al. 2008). In terms of suicide risk and overall safety, Marijuana has been linked to elevated risk of suicidality and self-injurious behaviors (Lynskey et al 2008).

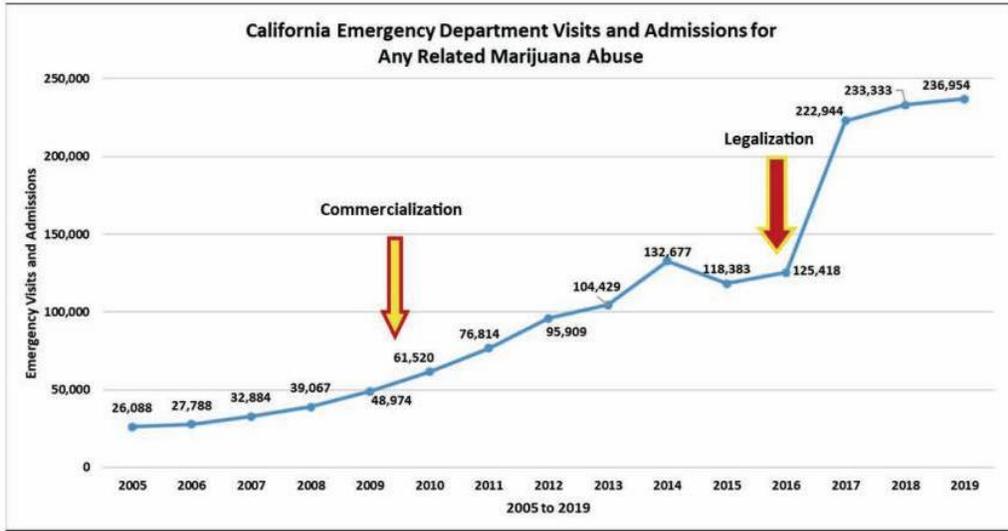
What is also concerning to me is the effects of Cannabis legalization and the effects it will have on the health system. In Hawaii, our emergency rooms and hospitals have limited capacity compared to our Mainland counterparts. With the legalization of Cannabis also comes increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations for Cannabis related medical issues. After the legalization of recreational marijuana there was an immediate increase in ED visits rates for cannabis intoxications across all ages in Michigan (Nguyen et al 2024). In California, from 2005 to 2019 there was a 1044% increase in ED visits and admissions for primary marijuana use (See article 1). Increases in emergency room visits will cause increased burden to the medical system by further limiting access to essential emergency services. Inpatient psychiatric hospitalization services will also be affected as patients who are experiencing cannabis associated psychosis or depression would most likely be needing admission for stabilization.

Being born and raised in Hawaii I feel a connection and feel that I have a responsibility to the people here. From my experiences working in the emergency department and seeing first-hand how Marijuana can affect an individual, it is my professional opinion that Marijuana is not harmless. Cannabis may have potential benefits, but the risks far outweigh those potential benefits and the downstream effects of legalization of Cannabis will be experienced for generations.

Sincerely,

Ian Nagata, DO

Article 1



Graph obtained from Marijuana's Impact on California: 2020 (Mo Med. 2021)

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:01:45 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen McGovern	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill because I am against making recreational marijuana legal. In states that have legalized recreational marijuana use car accident numbers have risen and studies show it is due to marijuana use. Cannabis slows decision making and reaction time, distorts perception and impairs coordination. Smoking cannabis harms lung tissue. It can cause schizophrenia, anxiety, and depression. It is also unfair to subject everyone to the unhealthy smoke and chemicals who don't choose to inhale it but have to because it's everywhere! Legalizing it makes children think it must be completely without health repercussions and in states where recreational use is legalized its use by younger children increases substantially. And personally, I really don't want to have to smell the strong smell everywhere I go many times a day as is the case in areas where it is legalized. And I don't want to see pot stores on every block as there is in many towns and cities where it's legal- it's depressing. That is a depressing statement about our society. I want to see a society that promotes good mental and physical health, not being a dumbed down stoner space cadet! Thank you for your work and for making Hawaii a place of healthy values!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:03:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Roy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB1246 Legalizing Recreational Marijuana.

I oppose the bill because the long term ramifications to individuals and families far outweigh any income in its sale. The probability of addictions is a known fact and the drug being readily accessible will have an adverse affect to schools, communities, workplaces for generations to come. The reality to consider if legalized - it could be your own family

Thank-you for hearling our concerns. Please vote NO.

Appreciate your time and commitment to keeping Hawaii a good place to raise our ohanas.

Diane

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 10:28:37 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blyth	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE LEGALIZING RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA.

Will legalizing marijuana stop the illegal purchase of marijuana?

There's already so much crime and violence in Hawaii, aside from the money, what is the true benefit to legalizing marijuana?

People find the loopholes-fireworks, firearms.

More drugs in our community = more problems in our community.

Once it becomes legal, there's no turning back.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:35:54 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glory Yoshida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill to legalize recreational marijuana in Hawaii. With the inability to monitor and prevent impaired drivers using alcohol and drugs (both legal and illegal) as well as speeding drivers, legalizing marijuana will only add to the already dangerous and unsafe roads that our community must drive on every day. Suspected alcohol-impaired drivers are at least given a field sobriety test and can then be immediately arrested and taken off the streets, but what field test is available for marijuana that can offer the same immediate arrest if found impaired? Do we really want to add another substance that can endanger the lives of your and my family and friends to the drivers on our roads?

Another reason to not legalize it is the proven danger that smoking marijuana very often leads to more dangerous and addictive drugs and substance abuse. Do we want our friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, or anyone else to fall into this lifestyle that will further erode their lives, and, in turn, our community? I certainly do not, and neither do the majority of law-abiding, responsible citizens of our state.

Please defeat HB1246 for the sake and safety of our people. Thank you.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:46:11 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I am writing in strong support of HB1246, the proposed legislation to establish the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, legalizing the personal adult use of cannabis beginning January 1, 2026. I submit this testimony as a Kanaka Maoli, a resident of Mō‘ili‘ili, an Executive Committee Member of the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i, and a Board Member of the Hawai‘i Workers Center.

The establishment of a regulatory framework for cannabis and hemp under the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs is a critical step in ensuring the safe, equitable, and responsible oversight of these industries. Legalization and regulation not only present economic opportunities for the state but also serve to rectify the historical injustices associated with the criminalization of cannabis—particularly among Native Hawaiians and other marginalized communities who have been disproportionately impacted by past drug policies.

By decriminalizing certain cannabis-related offenses and legalizing personal adult use, this legislation acknowledges the shifting perspectives on cannabis use and its medicinal, economic, and social benefits. Moreover, taxation on the retail sale of adult-use and medical cannabis can provide the state with much-needed revenue to fund education, healthcare, and social services that benefit all residents of Hawai‘i.

I also support the bill’s inclusion of new traffic safety measures to address concerns related to cannabis consumption and responsible use. Ensuring public safety while allowing adults the freedom to use cannabis responsibly is a balanced and necessary approach.

As a strong advocate for sustainability, environmental justice, and workers’ rights, I urge this committee to pass this legislation to move Hawai‘i toward a more just and economically viable future. Legalizing and regulating cannabis is a necessary step to creating a more equitable society and redirecting our resources toward community wellness rather than punitive measures.

I urge you to pass this bill in support of the people of Hawai‘i and our collective future.

Me ke aloha ‘āina,
Nanea Lo
Mō‘ili‘ili, HI 96826

Sierra Club of Hawai'i Executive Committee Member
Board Member, Hawai'i Workers Center
Kanaka Maoli/Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:49:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fehren Jones	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose HB 1246.

Aloha. I'm Fehren and I oppose HB 1246. I am native Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, Chinese, and African American wahine. I am born and raised on O'ahu in Ma'ili during my childhood. In Kapalama for most of my middles school- adult years. On the Moku O Keawe during the protesting of TMT and learning to farm cannabis. Now currently in Manoa within the last year.

I am interested in Hawai'i's legalization and will be for adult use if and when I see.

* native Hawaiians benefiting from legalization. Wether providing jobs, businesses, employment, just having a seat at the table to make sure we Hawaiian are able to afford to stay in Hawaii. Possibly able to secure land, because we are mahi'ai and Hawaiian. We're the stewards of the 'Aina. We belong here.

*having opportunity for wahine, Hawaiian women to have a head start in the legalization in this industry and having a seat at the table.

* funding/taxing goes to Hawaiian charters schools in preserving our culture, language, moolelo, farming, fishing, building lo'i, building loko i'a, being Hawaiian

*part of cannabis farming NEED to farm food as well to help provide for hawaii's schools.

*exports and no imports. We need to keep hawaii's money in Hawaii's economy.

*health care for our farmers.. BETTER health care.

*grants/affordable licensing for native Hawaiian women and native Hawaiians in farming, cultivating,....

*better our medical industry and patients before we leap into the legalization. Continue to protect out patients, farmer/caregiver rights.

*law enforcement ease off the cannabis scene. Honestly I think its a waste of money which could be used else where like meth, domestic violence, etc....

*protection to our legacy farmers.

these are a few things I would love to see happen before Hawaii cannabis goes legal.. there's many more. Please hear us and mahalo for your time. Aloha

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:15:48 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiana Wilbur	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose legalizing Marijuana, please have more engagement and real discussion with all communities and cities regarding Marijuana and stop categorizing hemp benefits with Marijuana. Hemp wood building and other benefits need to a separate discussion and legislation. There are too many negative impacts with the legalization of Marijuana. Mahalo for your time and understanding.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 8:31:57 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Kuwaye	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

When I heard this effort to legalize marijuana use has come up again, my heart sank. I was disappointed that legislators whom we depend on to make wise decisions for our island state, strategically located for commerce, has made a top priority of this foolish, destructive piece of legislation. To make revenue for our State by addicting our State is a scary thought. And that our state should possibly become a conduit for national and international distribution is an even scarier thought. Especially since now the southern US border is being closed. Please, please oppose this bill for the sake of our keiki and the quality of life of our State.

That four County Chiefs, and the Mayor and Prosecutor oppose this bill... is this not an alarm or warning not to go forward. They are closest to our communities and oversee the well being of our State on a closer level than legislators and thus should be listened to and worked with and not run counter to, especially since they will bear the consequence and impact of this bill. Have you met with them and heard their concerns? I entreat you to reconsider your position and to see the far reaching impact of your vote. This bill is absolutely not good for Hawaii.

Every state that has legalized marijuana for recreational use has seen significant increase in traffic accidents and fatalities and, more worrisome, under age use. Once legalized, we can't stop its spread and increasing harm to our land and society. This fuels addiction and will degrade our aina. We have enough problems. Why do we want to add to them? And make life harder for understaffed, overworked departments of our State that will need to deal with the consequences.

Sincerely,
Susan Kuwaye
Representative Sayama District

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:05:22 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Silvana Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Resident of 96815.

I urge you representatives to prioritize the benefits legalizing recreational marijuana. You're aware many states have implemented this and I have first hand experience having lived in Colorado for 5 years. I've seen the sales tax benefit all state residents. It has allowed for many public programs there, lately, the first two year of college tuition reimbursement for Colorado students and universal school lunches for all children in the state.

Now - Tourism, visitors WILL spend more money in Hawaii if they have legally available cannabis. We have an opportunity to improve infrastructure, provide housing for our unhoused, keeping our kanaka in Hawaii, help feed and educate the children.

With the current administration Hawaii must find ways to provide for itself apart from the continental U.S. and more funding is necessary for such task. It is time we move forward and leave antiquated views of this medicinal plant in the past.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:07:14 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Espero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Chairs and Committee members,

I am writing in support of HB1246. It may not be the perfect bill for everyone, but it is a great starting point until the end of session to work out the details.

Cannabis was once legal in the United States. In the 1800s, cannabis was a common medicine used by many.

In the early 1900s, greed and business interests worked to tax cannabis, then, eventually ban it. Cannabis was a competitive threat to paper/forest industry (William Hearst), oil interest (Gulf Oil/Andrew Mellon), and clothing/chemical (Dupont). The banning of cannabis/hemp was all about money.

BTW, Henry Ford wanted to build a car using hemp material and hemp fuel. Imagine if he had been able to do this. The world would have been a better place.

Fake news blamed Mexicans, Blacks, and Filipinos for using marihuana and threatening white America. Racism was common in the rhetoric against cannabis.

So now we are coming full circle. HB1246 is about righting a wrong that 24 states have already supported with almost 40 states approving medical cannabis.

The writing is on the wall, and it is inevitable that cannabis use for adults will happen one day nationally and locally.

Protecting our youth is paramount. Oversight and regulation are necessary. Alcohol and cigarettes are more dangerous than cannabis, and if you are not working to ban these substances or products, cannabis must be legalized for those adults who choose to use it.

Potential revenues will also help the state through tax collections.

Thank you for your time.

Will Espero, Retired State Senator

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:18:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gina Jones	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a taxpayer in Hawaii, this is the best and most efficient way for the state to increase tax revenue without placing the burden on everyone, especially since there was just a state tax cut given in our paychecks.

Additionally, it has been legalized in many other states and is safer than alcohol, non addictive, and regulated. Please pass this bill and allow the people of Hawaii to decide for themselves!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:23:18 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kainoa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The current policies attempt to balance access with regulation. However, they restrict freedoms, impose significant limits on caregivers and cooperatives, potentially affecting affordability and accessibility for medical patients. While adult-use laws prioritize simplicity and enforcement, medical patients face more detailed rules tailored to their specific health needs. If medical users share a home with residents who want to grow adult use cannabis, and they decide to grow, now the medical patient is disqualified under this bill. This also applies for caregivers, who are doing the labor out of love. This bill does not support 329 patients and caregivers, only the state and the dispensaries. I support HB 602, the one actually cares for the medical community.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:55:26 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daryl Yamada	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose the legalization of recreational marijuana. This will open the door to a negative influence that will impact future generations. Statistics prove that States that legalized marijuana show a dramatic increase in crime and mental illness especially in our keiki. We must protect our children and our islands from this deadly influence. Please do not pass this harmful legislation.

Thank you!

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 11:11:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvonne Alvarado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Yvonne Alvarado Support Bill HB1246

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:07:37 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diliaur Tellei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha chairs and members of the committee,

I'm writing in support of this bill and urge you to pass it. It's long past time we look at legalizing, decriminalizing, and regulating cannabis in Hawaii.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1246

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:59:51 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/4/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ikaika Keli'ihō'omalū	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Mai Kākou,

My name is Ikaika Keli'ihō'omalū. I am a third generation cannabis entrepreneur of Kanaka Māoli (Native Hawaiian) Descent from Kalapana, HI with nearly 17 years of experience in the cannabis industry.

Over the course of my fairly young career I have held a number of positions including two years on The San Francisco Cannabis Legalization task force, four years as the cultivation manager for Helius Therapeutics, New Zealands largest cannabis company, and four years as an founder and operator of my own cannabis business in Hayward, California.

While I am for the legalization of cannabis for adult use in Hawai'i today, I am writing in opposition and would like to propose a few comments for consideration.

This bill is not bad however, in its current draft, the bill does not go far enough to protect the interests of would be Native Hawaiian and small cannabis business owners.

I would highly suggest that the legislature strengthen equity licensure for Native Hawaiians within the cannabis industry. Why? For the size of our population Native Hawaiians have arguably been one of the groups hit hardest by the racist War on Drugs. We are the most likley ethnicity to be targeted and arrested for petty crime and drugs. Additionally, we have some of the lowest health outcomes and most impoverished communities which have been deliberately targeted by Green Harvest. Therefore, our community should be given the first opportunities for licensure. The cannabis industry is an opportunity for our community to build economic self-sufficiency, prosperity, and subsequently, be able to look after our own affairs.

I kindly ask that the legislature strengthen equity licensing opportunities for the Native Hawaiian community in the wording of this bill. This could look like:

-Awarding the first 20-50+ licenses to Native Hawaiian applicants.

-All licensees must have individuals of Native Hawaiian decent on their executive or management teams.

-That the Department of Hawaiian Homelands explicitly allow the establishment and operation of cannabis businesses on DHHL parcels.

-Requiring a certain percentage of licenses each year be awarded to Native Hawaiian entities.

Simply having Native Hawaiians as labourers or lower paying jobs is not enough within the consideration of an equity program. Real cannabis business ownership by Native Hawaiians is required.

I would also encourage the legislature reconsider disallowing craft cannabis dispensaries from selling products other than their own. This is extremely limiting and the cost to the craft cannabis licensee to do this would be immense. I would highly suggest that this license type be opened up further to allow the sale of products other than their own.

"License stacking" or the aggregation of several licenses of the same or different types should be limited and the legislature should include wording in the bill to limit this. Other states that have limited cultivation canopy size for example have seen business operators "stack" licenses to encompass canopy areas otherwise restricted in original legislation. This has been the case in California for example where adult use has been legal since 2018. Perhaps licensees could be disallowed from owning or operating 4 or more licenses of the same or different type.

Stronger regulations preventing out-of-state or foreign ownership of cannabis businesses should be strengthened. Perhaps further limitations on the amount of non-Hawaiian ownership allowed per license should be increased instead of 49% perhaps it should be 25%. The Hawaiian cannabis industry should be Hawaiian owned. We do not want the Hawaiian cannabis industry to look like the tourist industry in Hawai'i.

Lastly, I would encourage the legislature consider drafting wording in this bill which would create a certification program for Hawaiian produced cannabis products similar to what has been done with Kona coffee. Doing so would protect small business owners by increasing the value of their crops and strengthen Hawai'i's reputation for production of quality products both within HI as well as abroad.

Until these points are addressed I stand in opposition of this bill in its current format. Thank you for your consideration and time. If any of the Representatives wish to contact me I can be reached at Ikaika.k@kpadvisors.co.nz

Kind regards,

-Ikaika Keli'ihō'omalū