



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
S.B. NO. 319, RELATING TO MARIJUANA.

BEFORE THE:
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

DATE: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 016

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Alana L. Bryant, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) respectfully opposes this bill.

The purposes of the bill are to (1) increase the minimum amount of marijuana necessary for a person to commit the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree from one ounce to thirty grams, by amending section 712-1248(1)(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), and (2) increase the amount of marijuana a person may possess for the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree from three grams or less of marijuana to fifteen grams or less, by amending section 712-1249(2), HRS.

Expanded decriminalization of marijuana may increase recreational use in a way similar to legalization; however, decriminalized marijuana is unregulated, untested, and untaxed. This lack of regulation and testing creates a significant public health concern, particularly as marijuana use increases. Black market marijuana often contains pesticides, trace amounts of metals like lead and nickel, and other toxic chemicals. Regulated marijuana can be tested for these poisons, to increase the chances that the marijuana consumed by recreational users is relatively safe. Because there are no restrictions on the levels of pesticides and other toxins in black market marijuana, consumers risk inhaling or ingesting harmful substances.

Expanding the decriminalization of marijuana may also result in costs to the community associated with greater recreational marijuana use, such as increased traffic accidents, hospitalizations, and injuries associated with marijuana use. Without regulation and taxation, the community may have to absorb the costs of the negative impacts of increased marijuana use.

Allowing individuals to possess fifteen grams of marijuana also poses greater problems for law enforcement. At present, the distribution of marijuana is still illegal, although the possession of three grams or less of marijuana has been decriminalized. By allowing individuals to possess larger amounts of marijuana, law enforcement officers may not be able to distinguish between the possession of marijuana by recreational users who tend to carry only enough marijuana to fulfill their immediate needs, and individuals who are distributing marijuana or holding quantities sufficient for distribution. Decriminalizing up to fifteen grams of marijuana essentially decriminalizes the possession of sufficient quantities of marijuana to accommodate distribution. An unintended consequence of this bill would be that it makes it easier and more profitable to distribute black market marijuana.

If the eventual goal is the legalization of cannabis, an approach that comprehensively addresses a regulatory scheme to protect the public, support law enforcement, and provide revenue to the State to cover the costs of the negative effects of increased marijuana use would be a preferable way to reach that goal.

For the above reasons, we respectfully ask the Committee to hold this bill. Thank you for allowing us to offer testimony on the bill.

JON N. IKENAGA
STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

DEFENDER COUNCIL
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SB319 RELATING TO MARIJUANA

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) **SUPPORTS WITH AN AMENDMENT**

LATE

This measure expands upon the national work to decriminalize marijuana, and the work in this state to reduce the impact of the criminal justice system upon users. In 2019, Act 273 allowed for the possession of 3 grams or less, and imposed a fine (now rarely charged) of \$130.

Unfortunately, the possession of 3 grams is less than the standard quantity sold, so a normal purchaser is already above that limit. In lieu of a thorough restructuring of cannabis in law through other measures, further decriminalization is aligned with our knowledge of cannabis as a drug and cannabis users.

In this measure, “decriminalization” does not bar a police officer from finding probable cause and searching an individual for other offenses, or for the reasonable belief that an individual has more marijuana than the amount in the bill, or possesses another drug that is not legal.

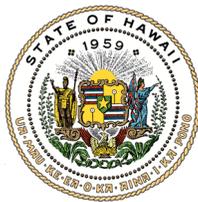
SUGGESTED AMENDMENT

As marijuana paraphernalia is still subjected to historic criminalization, OPD requests that the measure includes instruments.

SB319 should add to §329-43.5 “(f) This section shall not apply to the possession of drug paraphernalia to: (1) Store, contain, or conceal; or (2) Inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce into the human body marijuana.”

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
DIRECTOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

LATE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 319
RELATING TO MARIJUANA
Before the Senate Committee on
JUDICIARY

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 9:30 AM
State Capitol Conference Room 016, & Videoconference

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) opposes Senate Bill 319 that proposes to change from one (1) ounce to Thirty (30) grams the minimum amount of marijuana that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree and increases from three (3) grams or less to fifteen (15) grams or less the amount of marijuana that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree.

The DLE does not support this bill primarily because 15 grams of marijuana is approximately one-half (1/2) ounce of marijuana. Under this proposal, an amount of marijuana up to 15 grams would be considered a violation punishable by a fine. One-half of an ounce of marijuana is an amount that can facilitate prohibited distribution of marijuana on the street. Consequently, the DLE does not support SB 319 because a person in possession of a larger quantity of marijuana, with the lower penalty of a "violation" if caught, may have a greater temptation to illegally supply other people. The illegal distribution of marijuana on the street is an important concern for the DLE.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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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 KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i

February 11, 2025

RE: S.B. 319; RELATING TO MARIJUANA.

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee on Judiciary, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following testimony in **strong opposition** to Senate Bill 319.

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 de facto legalization of this now very powerful drug, marijuana.

As public officials we should always, first and foremost, do no harm. This bill would increase the black market, enrich drug dealers and increase the consumption of this now powerful drug.

I am especially concerned about our keiki.

First, what kind of message will we be sending to our keiki about marijuana if it is decriminalized (legalized) from user to dealer quantity? That would be putting the societal stamp of approval on its use. You will be telling our kids that marijuana is safe. Or it wouldn't be made more 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 further 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 now 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 S.B. 319. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benjamin T. Moszkowicz
Police Chief

William V. Brillhante Jr.
Managing Director

Reed K. Mahuna
Deputy Police Chief

County of Hawai`i

POLICE DEPARTMENT

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February 10, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Senator Rhoads,

RE: SENATE BILL 319 RELATING TO MARIJUANA
DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2025
TIME: 9:30 A.M.
PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hawai`i Police Department **strongly opposes** Senate Bill 319 Relating to Marijuana. This bill seeks to expand the decriminalization of possession of marijuana from the current 3 grams to 15 grams. 15 grams of marijuana equates to about 15-20 marijuana cigarettes, an amount that one could reasonably deduce is beyond the expectation for personal use.

Senate Bill 319 is also flawed in failing to address some fundamental Health issues. First and foremost, Marijuana contains a mind-altering substance (THC) and yet no distinction is being made between 15 grams of Marijuana with 5% THC or 15 grams at 30% THC. Hawai`i is constantly facing a myriad of both physiological and psychological problems associated with Marijuana use.

We are hard-pressed to understand recent legislative attempts to curtail teen use of tobacco and vaping; battling homelessness; the support for "Vision zero" measures to reduce traffic fatalities while at the same time decriminalizing a larger amount of a mind-altering substance, which has if not a direct, an indirect effect on some of the herein cited legislative measures.

By decriminalizing Marijuana, no matter what the amount is, the clear message being sent to our communities, to include our impressionable youth, is that Marijuana consumption is acceptable and harmless.

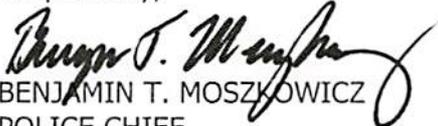
A study by the Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health gathered data from six states – California, **Hawaii**, Illinois, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and West Virginia which are states that perform toxicology tests on drivers involved in fatal car crashes between 1999 and 2010. Dr. Guohua Li, director of the Center for Injury Epidemiology

SENATE BILL 319 RELATING TO MARIJUANA
DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2025
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PLACE: CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE
PAGE 2

and Prevention at Columbia, and co-author of the study has reported that alcohol contributed to about 40% of traffic fatalities throughout the decade, but researchers found that drugs played an increasing role in fatal traffic accidents. Drugged driving accounted for more than 28% of traffic deaths in 2010, which is 16% more than it was in 1999.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We urge the committee to reconsider or amend this bill to address these concerns.

Respectfully,


BENJAMIN T. MOSZYOWICZ
POLICE CHIEF

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT
KA 'OIHANA MĀKA'I O HONOLULU
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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LATE

RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR
MEIA



ARTHUR J. LOGAN
CHIEF
KAHU MĀKA'I
KEITH K. HORIKAWA
RADE K. VANIC
DEPUTY CHIEFS
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE RI-HR

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members
Committee on Judiciary
State Senate
415 South Beretania Street, Room 016
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 319, Relating to Marijuana

I am Raynor M. Ikehara, Major of the Narcotics/Vice Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD opposes Senate Bill No. 319, Relating to Marijuana.

The HPD opposes legislation that seeks to weaken current marijuana laws. The Federal Schedule of Controlled Substances continues to list marijuana as a Schedule I controlled substance.

The HPD is concerned that increasing the availability of marijuana in the state will negatively impact public safety. Some areas of concern include the potential rise in impaired drivers and the product's diversion. If this bill is passed, it would lead to the increased availability of marijuana, making it easier for everyone to access, including juveniles.

The HPD urges you to oppose Senate Bill No. 319, Relating to Marijuana.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

Sincerely,


#2 Arthur J. Logan
Chief of Police


Raynor M. Ikehara, Major
Narcotics/Vice Division

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

P.O. Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158

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Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

Room 016& VIDEOCONFERENCE

9:30 AM

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 319 - CANNABIS

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,726 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on As of February 3, 2025 . We are always mindful that 937 - 28% - of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to express our **strong support for SB 319** that changes from 1 ounce to 30 grams the minimum amount of marijuana that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree and increases from 3 grams or less to 15 grams or less the amount of marijuana that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree.

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, February 3, 2025

<https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2025-02-03.pdf>

In 2020, the Institute of Medicine warned Hawai`i that if the government continued to criminalize cannabis, something worse would happen...and it did. The methamphetamine scourge got a foothold in Hawai`i. At that time our legislature was debating cannabis use in Hawai`i. It took 15 years = until 2015 - for Hawai`i to enact a dispensary system for cannabis to protect consumers from mold, pesticides, and other contaminants.

This bill is a modest approach to decriminalizing cannabis and Community Alliance on Prisons supports this step forward. Hawai`i has too many people incarcerated for low level offenses that prevents law enforcement from addressing more serious crimes in our communities. We hope the committee passes this legislature!

Mahalo nui!



February 10, 2025

Re: In support of SB 319 and urging amendments

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and distinguished members of Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Karen O'Keefe. I am the director of state policies for the non-profit Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest cannabis policy reform organization in the nation. I am an attorney who has worked on cannabis policy at MPP since 2003. For the past two years, I have had the pleasure of working with a coalition of Hawai'i advocates as part of the Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform (HACR).

MPP strongly supports passing SB 319, as well as the amendments proposed by HACR. The amount of cannabis covered by decriminalization in Hawai'i — three grams — is the smallest amount of cannabis of any state legalization or decriminalization law. Most laws apply to up to at least an ounce, which is widely accepted to be a personal use amount.¹

Because three grams is such a small amount, hundreds of Hawai'i residents and tourists continue to be arrested every year for cannabis.² Some of those individuals are incarcerated.³ All suffer the life-altering effects of having a criminal record.⁴ While 15 grams is an improvement over the status quo, it is still lower than the personal use quantity allowed or decriminalized in 27 of 31 states.⁵ As such, it will continue to result in traumatic arrests and criminal records for personal use amounts

We also caution that a flat fee of \$130 is disproportionate and out of reach of many struggling Hawai'i residents. In comparison, the fee for smoking a cigarette where it is illegal — such as in a restaurant — is a maximum of \$50.⁶

MPP urges you to also make the amendments proposed by HACR, to ensure lives are not derailed for possession of a plant that most voters believe should be legal for adults⁷:

- increase the decriminalized amount to 30 grams
- include and define an equivalent amount of concentrates and infused products

¹ www.mpp.org/issues/decriminalization/state-laws-with-alternatives-to-incarceration-for-marijuana-possession/

² <https://norml.org/marijuana/library/state-marijuana-arrests/hawaii-marijuana-arrests/> (Note that the data since 2020 has been partial, with only 50-75% of agencies reporting.)

³ See testimony of Daniel Pullman on HB 1246, explaining that he witnessed a defendant getting sentenced to 30 days for about a cigarette's pack worth of cannabis. (A pack of cigarettes weighs about 20 grams.)

⁴ www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2022/08/Americans-with-Criminal-Records-Poverty-and-Opportunity-Profile.pdf

⁵ www.mpp.org/issues/decriminalization/state-laws-with-alternatives-to-incarceration-for-marijuana-possession/

⁶ HRS 328J-12 (a)

⁷ Hawai'i Perspectives Winter 2023 Report. (finding 58% support for legalization)

- remove penalties for paraphernalia to use or store cannabis
- reduce the fine from \$130 to up to \$50, with a community service alternative; though \$130 could remain for public smoking

While we are extremely disappointed that the House once again failed to legalize cannabis for adults, we urge the Senate not to compound the injustice by continuing to jail and criminalize people possessing personal use amounts of cannabis.

Please report SB 319 out of committee, but first amend it to more comprehensively ensure lives are not ruined for personal possession of cannabis. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

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



LATE

Committee: Judiciary
Hearing Date/Time: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 9:30am
Place: Conference Room 016 & Via Videoconference
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in SUPPORT of SB319
Relating to Marijuana**

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

The ACLU of Hawai'i **supports SB319**, which changes from 1 ounce to 30 grams the minimum amount of marijuana that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree. The bill also increases from 3 grams or less to 15 grams or less the amount that constitutes the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree.

SB319 will further reduce the number of unreasonable arrests for cannabis possession in our already bloated criminal justice system.

Arrest for possession of small amounts of cannabis, or related paraphernalia, is one of the most common points of entry into the criminal justice system. In 2019, the legislature passed, and the Governor signed, ACT 273, which decriminalized the possession of 3 grams or less and imposed a fine of \$130.

The current tiny threshold, while an improvement to past cannabis prohibition policies, continues to result in hundreds of individuals being arrested in Hawai'i each year and facing possible jail time for simple possession of cannabis.

This bill simply expands on that laudable effort by increasing the amount of cannabis possession decriminalized, along with related paraphernalia, while reducing the fine to an amount that is far less likely to create hardship for those most affected by cannabis prohibition.

Removing criminal penalties for certain cannabis offenses will keep people out of jail and save taxpayer dollars. We currently spend over \$250 a day to incarcerate an adult. This proposed measure will eliminate the many collateral consequences that flow from cannabis arrests, thereby reducing the gross number of people entering or otherwise harmed by the criminal justice system. Money currently spent on enforcement could be used for efforts that would *actually* increase public safety.

SB319 provides a safe and smart alternative to current cannabis laws.

Our state's ineffective prohibition on recreational cannabis has damaged civil liberties in many ways – eroding protections against searches and seizures, putting large numbers of non-violent individuals behind bars and targeting people of color. Eliminating criminal penalties for certain

cannabis offenses, like those outlined in this bill, will prevent people from becoming needlessly entangled in the criminal justice system, eliminate many collateral consequences that flow from cannabis arrests, and allow Hawai‘i to reinvest the money it saves for important community needs.

Decriminalizing certain cannabis-related offenses will reduce targeted enforcement of cannabis laws against specific communities.

Not all communities have been impacted equally by current enforcement of Hawai‘i’s cannabis laws; these laws overly impact men under 25 and Native Hawaiians. These groups are arrested in numbers disproportionate to their share of the population.

For the above reasons, we urge the Committee to support this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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.



Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform In Support of HB 319

February 10, 2025

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and committee members:

The Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform (HACR) supports SB319 and asks for amendments.

Polling shows most Hawai'i residents believe cannabis should be legal.¹ Yet, Hawai'i has not only not legalized cannabis for adults, but **our “decriminalization” law applies to the lowest amount of all the decriminalization and legalization laws in the U.S.**² Twenty-four of the 31 other laws apply to at least an ounce.³

Three-grams is not even $\frac{1}{8}$ of an ounce, a common amount for those purchasing only a small quantity. The tiny threshold results in hundreds of individuals being arrested in Hawai'i each year and facing possible jail time for possessing cannabis for their personal use.⁴

SB319 would bring Hawai'i's decriminalization law closer in line with other states. However, it still falls short in some areas. Even if it passed as-is, Hawai'i would still impose traumatic arrests, jail time and life-altering penalties for the personal use of cannabis.

As public defender David Pullman testified in writing to JHA on HB1246:

“The measly 3 grams that are decriminalized in Hawai'i 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.

¹ A 2024 Pacific Resource Partnership found 58% support for legalization.

² The second lowest, Louisiana, decriminalized amount is 14 grams; New Hampshire (3/4 oz or the equivalent); North Carolina (1/2 ounce), and North Dakota (1/2 ounce).

³ mpp.org/issues/decriminalization/state-laws-with-alternatives-to-incarceration-for-marijuana-possession/

⁴ For year-by-year arrests reported to the FBI's NIBRS, see:

<https://norml.org/marijuana/library/state-marijuana-arrests/hawaii-marijuana-arrests/> These numbers are likely incomplete due to .

Such enlightened states as Mississippi and Nebraska allow for 30 grams. Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i is long overdue. Please end the tragedy of cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i once and for all.
(emphasis added)"

A pack of cigarettes weighs about 20 grams. Since SB319 would only apply to 15 grams, it would not have prevented this excessive and traumatic sentence unless it was revised to include up to an ounce (or 30 grams).

We urge you to also make additional changes to improve SB319's criminal justice impact:

- increase the decriminalized amount to 30 grams (about an ounce)
- include and define an equivalent amount of concentrates and infused products
- remove penalties for paraphernalia to use or store cannabis
- reduce the fine from \$130 to up to \$50, with a community service alternative; though \$130 could remain for public smoking

Most or all of these provisions are common in other decriminalization (and/or legalization) laws, as they are best practices for decriminalization.

We have included suggested language as an appendix.

Increasing the Amount Decriminalized & Including Equivalent Amounts

Fifteen grams would still be one of the lowest limits of any decriminalization or legalization state. Of the 31 legal or decriminalization states, only three — Louisiana, North Carolina, and North Dakota — have similarly low threshold amount. Hawai'i already has recognized that a far greater amount — four ounces — is a personal use quantity for medical patients. Thirty grams (around one ounce) is far more appropriate, and in line with other states.

It is also important that there be clearly delineated equivalent amounts that are decriminalized for concentrated cannabis and infused products. This will make it easy for both adults and police to know what quantities trigger harsher penalties, and will avoid jailing those returning from one of the 24 legal cannabis states with a personal use quantity of edibles. Many legalization laws and some decriminalization laws — including New Hampshire’s — take this approach.

We suggest a “personal use quantity” be defined as 30 grams or less, up to 5 grams of concentrated cannabis, or cannabis-infused products with or up to 500 milligrams of THC. This is in line with other states, and lower than some.

Reducing the Fine and Providing a Community Service Alternative

The next issue we urge you to amend is the excessive fine. Hawai‘i’s \$130 fine poses a significant hardship to many. It is almost three times as high as Hawai‘i’s up to \$50 fine for smoking in a restaurant or other prohibited location.

The Fed’s 2022 Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households survey found that 18% of Americans could not cover an expense over \$100 using only their savings.⁵ Hefty fines can have a devastating effect on low-income individuals, making it difficult to pay for food, rent, medications, and other essentials. Up to \$50 — or about 3.5 hours of work at minimum wage — is much more reasonable for conduct Hawai‘i residents believe should be legal.

An up to \$130 fine could be imposed, however, for public smoking, which is a significant concern of many.

We also recommend including a community service alternative to fines, to include a non-monetary punishment for those who cannot afford a fine.

Including Paraphernalia

Please also amend SB 319 to remove penalties for paraphernalia for the use, storage, or possession of cannabis. Those found with cannabis will also have a container it is in, making the paraphernalia charge duplicative. The paraphernalia

⁵ www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2022-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202305.pdf

fine is also excessive at up to \$500. A staggering 37% of Americans cannot afford an emergency \$400 offense.⁶

SB319 should add to §329-43.5 “(f) This section shall not apply to the possession of drug paraphernalia to: (1) Store, contain, or conceal; or (2) Inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce into the human body marijuana.”

Please report SB319 out of committee, but first amend it to more comprehensively ensure lives are not ruined for personal possession of cannabis. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

The Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform

Member Organizations include: ACLU of Hawai'i, Cannabis Society of Hawai'i, Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i, Last Prisoner Project, Marijuana Policy Project

⁶ www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2023-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2022-expenses.htm

Appendix: Possible Amendments to SB 319

SECTION 1. Section 329-43.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsections (a) and (f) to read as follows:

"§329-43.5 Prohibited acts related to drug paraphernalia. (a) Except as provided in ~~[subsection]~~ subsections (e) [7] and (f), it ~~[is]~~ shall be unlawful for any person to use, or to possess with intent to use, drug paraphernalia to plant, propagate, cultivate, grow, harvest, manufacture, compound, convert, produce, process, prepare, test, analyze, pack, repack, store, contain, conceal, inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce into the human body a controlled substance in violation of this chapter. A violation of this subsection shall constitute a violation subject to a fine of no more than \$500.

(f) This section shall not apply to the possession of drug paraphernalia to:

- (1) Store, contain, or conceal; or
- (2) Inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce into the human body, marijuana."

SECTION 2. Section 712-1248, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (1) to read as follows:

"(1) A person commits the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree if the person knowingly:

(a) Possesses fifty or more capsules or tablets containing one or more of the Schedule V substances;

(b) Possesses one or more preparations, compounds, mixtures, or substances, of an aggregate weight of one-eighth ounce or more, containing one or more of the Schedule V substances;

(c) Possesses one or more preparations, compounds, mixtures, or substances, of an aggregate weight of ~~[one ounce]~~ thirty grams or more, containing any marijuana; or

(d) Distributes any marijuana or any Schedule V substance in any amount."

SECTION 3. Section 712-1249, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"(1) A person commits the offense of promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree if the person knowingly possesses any marijuana or any Schedule V substance in any amount.

(2) Promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree ~~[is]~~ shall be a petty misdemeanor; provided that:

(A) possession or transfer without remuneration of a personal use quantity ~~[less]~~ of marijuana [is] shall be a violation,

punishable by a fine of [~~\$130.~~] up to \$50. A person found responsible for a violation under this section may request, and shall be granted, a penalty of up to four hours of community service in lieu of a fine;

(B) smoking marijuana in a public place shall be a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$130. A person found responsible for a violation under this section may request, and shall be granted, a penalty of up to ten hours of community service in lieu of a fine;:

(3) As used in this section, "personal use quantity" means no more than:

(a) 30 grams cannabis other than concentrated cannabis and cannabis-infused products;

(b) five grams of concentrated cannabis; or

(c) cannabis-infused products containing no more than 500 milligrams of tetrahydrocannabinol."

SECTION 4. This Act does not affect rights and duties that matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were begun before its effective date.

SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



Testimony in Opposition to SB 319- Relating to Marijuana

Hearing on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 9:30 am
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

To: Committee on Judiciary
Sen Karl Rhoades, Chair
Sen Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 319- Relating to Marijuana, which decriminalizes marijuana by increasing the amount of detrimental drug to constitute an offense and lowering the severity of promoting a detrimental drug.

SB 319 goes further to decriminalize marijuana than current law which allows possession of up to 3 grams of marijuana for personal use. Possessing over 3 grams is a misdemeanor with up to 30 days jail and/ or fine of up to \$1,000.

No one should have their life or job opportunities negatively impacted by a conviction for possession of a small amount of weed. However, marijuana in Hawaii has been so decriminalized, it is almost legal without sanctions. Even possessing under 1lb of marijuana is only a misdemeanor, which is a lot of product for personal use.

SB 319 attempts to equate possession of small amounts of marijuana, i.e., under 30 grams, as possession of Schedule V drugs such as cough syrup with codeine and common analgesic type drugs like Ibuprofen. However, marijuana is still a Schedule I drug on the federal level and illegal. Trying to reclassify marijuana to Schedule V on the state level makes no sense.

In addition, if a person has a health-related need for marijuana, Hawaii has well established medical use marijuana program. Almost anyone can apply for and obtain a 329 medical marijuana card for a host of health-related reasons primarily anxiety and pain.

In summary, SB 319 attempts to further decriminalize marijuana and put it in the same category as cough syrup with codeine and ibuprofen for pain and fever relief. In essence reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule V drug. Marijuana is already decriminalized where almost no one goes to jail for possessing small amounts of product. And there is a medical use marijuana program for those who want to obtain marijuana for health-related needs. It does not change the fact that it remains a Schedule I drug and illegal on the federal level. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 319.

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.



Submitted Online: Monday, February 3, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair

FROM: Eva Andrade, President

RE: Opposition to HB 1246 Relating to Cannabis

LATE

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 are opposed to SB319, which, under the guise of decriminalization, effectively moves Hawaii closer to the full legalization of marijuana.

By significantly increasing the threshold for what is considered a criminal offense, this bill undermines the very laws that were put in place to protect public health and safety. Studies from other states that have relaxed their marijuana laws show increases in youth use, impaired driving incidents, and mental health crises, particularly among young people. Reducing penalties for possession of larger amounts sends the message that marijuana is harmless, despite overwhelming evidence of its harmful effects on brain development, addiction rates, and societal well-being.

Additionally, this bill disregards the negative consequences of marijuana use in our communities. Hawaii is already struggling with substance abuse issues, and expanding access to marijuana—whether through decriminalization or legalization—only exacerbates these challenges. Law enforcement officials in states that have decriminalized or legalized marijuana have reported significant increases in black market activity, making regulation and enforcement even more difficult. Moreover, these policy shifts often disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, leading to higher rates of substance dependency and decreased academic and professional outcomes for our youth.

Finally, SB319 paves the way for full-scale legalization under the false promise of social justice and economic gain, while ignoring the broader consequences for public health and community safety. Rather than weakening our drug laws, we should focus on prevention, education, and treatment efforts that help individuals avoid addiction and its damaging effects. Hawaii cannot afford to make the same mistakes as other states that have rushed into marijuana decriminalization, only to face increased crime, addiction, and mental health concerns. We urge you to reject SB319 and instead prioritize policies that truly promote the well-being of our families and future generations. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/8/2025 9:39:48 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerald Busch MD MPH	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

My name is Gerald Busch MD MPH, I am immediate past president of the Hawaii Psychiatric Medical Association. I served as site director for forensic psychiatry training for the UH JABSOM Dept of Psychiatry at OCCC from 2020 to 2024, as well as Director of Medical Education and Patient Care in the Queens Medical Center Psychiatric Emergency Department during the same time period. Therefore, i have accumulated a great deal of first hand experience in our community regarding both the effects of cannabis on our people and on our youth. In four years at OCCC, I did not encounter a single pretrial detainee who had been charged with cannabis possession.

Dr. Adinoff’s argument in support of cannabis legalization in Hawai’i is based on several key premises: that the greatest harm of cannabis is criminalization rather than the drug itself, that legalization ensures a safe and regulated market, that adolescent use declines in legal states, and that legalization benefits public health. While these points may sound appealing on the surface, a closer examination reveals significant flaws in reasoning, oversights in evidence, and blatant contradictions within the real-world outcomes of cannabis legalization in other states.

First, Dr. Adinoff, who has no experience as a doctor in our state, asserts that the most significant harm of cannabis lies not in its biological or psychiatric effects, but rather in the criminal penalties associated with its prohibition. This argument minimizes the well-documented harms of cannabis, particularly its effects on cognitive function, motivation, and psychiatric health. It is well established that regular cannabis use, particularly high-potency THC products, increases the risk of developing cannabis use disorder, exacerbates psychiatric conditions such as anxiety and psychosis, and impairs cognitive function, especially in adolescents and young adults. While it is true that an arrest or criminal record for cannabis possession can have long-term consequences, this does not negate the equally serious consequences of cannabis dependence, impaired work and academic performance, and the increased risk of motor vehicle accidents due to intoxication. Furthermore, the idea that criminalization is the greatest harm ignores the reality that many states have already moved toward decriminalization without full-scale commercial legalization, successfully reducing the legal consequences of possession without unleashing the broader negative effects of an unrestrained cannabis industry.

Dr. Adinoff further argues that legalization allows for a well-regulated cannabis market that ensures product safety and protects the public from harmful unregulated substances. However, the reality in legalized states suggests otherwise. The commercial cannabis industry has followed the path of tobacco and alcohol, prioritizing profit over public health and lobbying to weaken

regulations. Misleading labeling is widespread, with many cannabis products failing to accurately disclose THC content, and there have been numerous cases of contamination with pesticides and heavy metals. Moreover, even in states with strict regulatory frameworks, the illicit market has not disappeared. In California, despite a fully legal cannabis market, unlicensed dispensaries continue to operate, often outcompeting legal sellers due to lower prices and avoiding taxes. The assumption that legalization alone will result in a clean and well-regulated market is not supported by the evidence from other states.

One of the more concerning claims in Dr. Adinoff's testimony is that adolescent cannabis use has decreased in legal states. This assertion relies on selective interpretation of data. While some broad surveys indicated that overall adolescent use has remained stable, other more recent data reveal more concerning trends. Daily or near-daily cannabis use among adolescents has increased in some areas, and the perceived risk of cannabis has dramatically declined. High-potency THC products, which were largely unavailable in previous decades, are now widely used, with adolescents increasingly turning to cannabis concentrates, vapes, and edibles. This shift in consumption patterns is particularly problematic, as research suggests that high-dose THC is associated with an increased risk of developing cannabis use disorder and experiencing long-term cognitive impairment. Simply citing aggregate statistics on adolescent use fails to address the deeper changes in usage patterns that have emerged post-legalization.

Dr. Adinoff claims that legalization enhances public health. Yet, the real-world data from legal states suggest the opposite. Emergency department visits related to cannabis intoxication, psychosis, and cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome have surged. We already have quite a cannabis disease burden in our emergency department at the Queens Medical Center. The number of daily and near-daily cannabis users has skyrocketed, with a sevenfold increase in Americans consuming cannabis on a near-daily basis. This pattern of use mirrors what is seen with other addictive substances, such as alcohol and tobacco, where a small percentage of heavy users drive the majority of consumption. Additionally, cannabis-impaired driving has become a growing public safety issue, with an increase in motor vehicle accidents linked to THC intoxication. Dr. Adinoff's testimony does not acknowledge these consequences, instead presenting an overly optimistic if not unrealistic view of cannabis legalization's public health effects.

The notion that legal cannabis would reduce opioid and alcohol consumption has also been widely discredited. Early studies suggested a possible correlation between cannabis availability and decreased opioid use, but more recent analyses have shown that cannabis legalization is more likely to increase rather than decrease opioid overdose deaths. Similarly, predictions that legal cannabis would reduce alcohol consumption have not materialized. In many cases, alcohol consumption has remained stable or even increased in some demographics following legalization. The assumption that cannabis would function as a harm reduction tool for other substances has been largely contradicted by real-world evidence.

Dr. Adinoff also suggests that legalization has delivered economic benefits through tax revenue. While cannabis taxation has generated revenue for states, the financial benefits have been underwhelming when compared to the costs of increased regulation, enforcement, and public health impacts. States such as California have struggled with declining cannabis tax revenues as

prices drop, with cannabis taxes now accounting for only a fraction of total state revenue. Additionally, many cannabis companies have failed to pay taxes owed, with 15% of California's cannabis businesses defaulting on their tax obligations in 2023. The promise of economic windfalls from legalization has not materialized as advocates initially suggested.

Finally, while Dr. Adinoff presents legalization as a rational and necessary step for Hawai'i, he does not acknowledge the unique characteristics of the state. Hawai'i has a distinct culture, an economy heavily reliant on tourism, and a geographic isolation that makes cannabis regulation more challenging. The unintended consequences seen in other legalized states—such as increased public consumption, higher rates of emergency room visits, and persistent illicit markets—could pose particular challenges for Hawai'i. Moreover, the claim that criminalization has disproportionately harmed certain communities must be examined in context. While racial disparities in drug enforcement have been a valid concern, decriminalization (rather than full commercialization) has been shown to be just as effective in reducing cannabis-related arrests without opening the door to widespread commercialization and its associated harms.

In sum, Dr. Adinoff's argument for cannabis legalization rests on a series of optimistic assumptions that do not hold up against real-world evidence. His claim that criminalization is the greatest harm ignores the well-documented psychiatric and cognitive effects of cannabis. His assertion that legalization ensures safety contradicts the experiences of states struggling with unregulated products and persistent black markets. The argument that adolescent use has declined selectively overlooks the rising prevalence of high-potency THC products among youth. The promise of public health benefits has been undermined by rising cannabis-related ER visits and addiction rates. And the notion that legalization would reduce opioid and alcohol use has been debunked by more recent research. Hawai'i should approach cannabis policy with a critical eye, considering the unintended consequences of commercialization rather than blindly accepting the promises of industry advocates.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:08:58 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Germaine Meyers	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Please oppose SB319.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:29:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Allen Cardines, Jr.	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Allen Cardines, Jr., and I oppose SB319. I am from Nanakuli on Leeward Oahu, and the last thing our children, families, and community need is more legalized marijuana in our community. More legalized marijuana in our community means more problems in our community. We already have serious issues, and the last thing we need is more.

These two videos present numerous reasons why I oppose SB319:

Feb. 7, 2024 Opposition to Legalizing Commercial Marijuana: <https://youtu.be/lhRV99H4ANY>

Do NOT legalize recreational cannabis in Hawaii: https://youtu.be/iArVQYK4_OM

1. **SB319 is de facto legalization** – By significantly increasing the threshold for what is considered a criminal offense, this bill weakens existing drug laws and sends a message that marijuana use is not a serious issue, despite its well-documented harms.

2. **Negative societal and public health impacts** – States that have relaxed their marijuana laws have seen increases in youth use, impaired driving, mental health issues, and black-market activity, all of which put communities at risk. We don't want this in our community!

3. **Hawaii should prioritize prevention over decriminalization** – Instead of weakening drug laws, lawmakers should focus on prevention, education, and treatment programs to address substance abuse issues and protect families and future generations.

How does this bill protect and help future generations? It doesn't.

For the sake of our children, vote no to SB319.

Mahalo,

Allen Cardines, Jr

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:51:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Chinen	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I oppose this bill as it relaxes laws surrounding marijuana. Thank you for your time.

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/9/2025 11:10:49 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONGLY OPPOSE! The only people who should have possession of marijuana should be those with legitimate medical needs for pain relief and disease symptom alleviation, NOT for "recreational use" or entertainment.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:26:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erin Chinen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Erin Chinen, and I oppose SB319. I am from Kaneohe, Oahu. The negative effects on our children and families are not worth the economic benefits. Please look at the states that have legalized recreational marijuana as evidence as to why we don't want/need this in our state. It will only cause more physical, mental, and social health issues. Our own police department is opposing this bill because they know it will only exacerbate the existing issues they're dealing with. As a mom of 3 kids, a pastor's wife, and advocate for our children's overall well-being, I plead with you to please consider the negative impact legalizing recreational marijuana will have on our beloved Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and for serving our state.

Blessings,

Erin Chinen

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:07:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Representatives,

My 'ohana and I stand in strong opposition to this bill that decriminalizes a person who **possesses 60 joints or 30 grams of ILLEGAL Potent Drug Marijuana**. It is already decriminalized to have six cigarettes or joints worth of marijuana. A person who has 30 grams or **SIXTY JOINTS** with them clearly needs psychological help. This bill undermines current drug laws and sends a strong message that the illegal drug use of marijuana is okay despite the detrimental effects on public health.

Let the Senate focus on hearing and passing bills to help the health and wellness of the people they serve.

Carm Akim, RN MSN WCC

Acute Care Nurse

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:22:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Joseph-paul Akim born and raised in Makakilo. I strongly oppose SB319. We don't want weed in our beautiful community. I have small children and I want to make sure they are protected from these illegal drugs. The states that decriminalized marijuana have more kids smoking or using it. More people suffer from mental illness and impaired driving. Our islands will benefit more by preventing our kids from trying or using marijuana rather than making the laws we have right now weaker. I rather not have my kids and their friends **learn how to cope without dope** other slap them on their hands charge them 130\$ and do community service.

Sincerely,

Joseph-paul Akim

Concerned Father and Community Volunteer

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:49:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE this bill. Everyone understands the volume of 1 ounce of MJ. Less can picture the volume of 30 grams.

The play on words is deceitful.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:57:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Blyth	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE.

How will increasing the amount of marijuana before it is considered promoting a detrimental drug help our Hawaii.

As parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, what is the message that you're sharing with our young adults, teens, children?

By increasing the amount the message being sent is that it's okay to be selling and using marijuana.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:12:51 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charis Logan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

1. SB319 is de facto legalization – By significantly increasing the threshold for what is considered a criminal offense, this bill weakens existing drug laws and sends a message that marijuana use is not a serious issue, despite its well-documented harms.

2. Negative societal and public health impacts – States that have relaxed their marijuana laws have seen increases in youth use, impaired driving, mental health issues, and black-market activity, all of which put communities at risk.

3. Hawaii should prioritize prevention over decriminalization – Instead of weakening drug laws, lawmakers should focus on prevention, education, and treatment programs to address substance abuse issues and protect families and future generations.

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:58:48 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mikela Kobayashi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Mahalo for your hard work and efforts for the people of Hawaii. I appreciate all your work.

As a native Hawaiian, mother, and community member, I strongly oppose this bill.

I participated in various hearings and listened to many of the testimonies. Only those such as growers or distributors were in support of these types of bills. However, a wide variety of leaders and constituents were in strong opposition including the police department, fire departments, healthcare representatives, the prosecuting attorney, parents, teachers, students, pastors, and many more! These are the people, the frontline, the families, that will have to deal with the consequences of this bill. We would much rather find other solutions to our economic crisis than to legalize recreational marijuana.

Decriminalizing or adjusting offense requirements will not make our communities safer.

Controlling or regulating sales will not eliminate the black market. It will instead encourage a destructive culture. It will replace restaurants with cannabis shops, it will alter the smell of our streets even more, it will promote a lifestyle that could lead to greater poverty.

Legalization will make it that much more accessible to underage citizens. I'm afraid of the amount of accidents that will happen when it becomes more accessible such as overdosing or unintentional consumption.

There are a ton of concerns and I'm sure you've heard them all, so please consider the cry of our people!! Please show the people of Hawaii that you will vote according to our desires and needs over your personal opinions.

Thank you again for your hard work.

Mahalo,

Mikela Kobayashi

LATE

SB-319

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 7:30:46 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Landis Lum	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairman Rhoads and members of the committee:

I am a physician double boarded in both addiction and family medicine, and am the main physician at the IHS inpatient detox and severe mental illness center (Imi Ola Piha) serving the homeless.

Just as a certain percentage of folks introduced to alcohol become addicted alcoholics, states that have legalized recreational THC use saw an increase in addiction (cannabis use disorder or CUD) in both adolescents and adults. Up to 50 percent of chronic daily users will develop CUD, which is associated with cognitive impairment, lower graduation rates from high school and college, and poor work performance. There is significant functional impairment and distress, with persistent use despite knowledge of adverse consequences. The high is similar to alcohol: slurred speech, lack of drive/motivation, poor coordination and reaction times (leading to fatal car accidents, or chronic pain/amputations in survivors), and impairment of associative learning. Weed addiction may cause misery to both self and others due to depression, cyclic vomiting syndrome, panic attacks, paranoia, and agitation.

The esteemed medical journal “The Lancet” followed over 1000 people in New Zealand and examined the effects of cannabis from age 18 to 45.

Every few years they measured aging based on MRI brain scans, walking speed, and facial age. They also evaluated practical financial knowledge, financial planfulness, credit scores, financial problems, social support, loneliness, and life satisfaction
“We followed a representative birth cohort for 45 years...By midlife, long-term cannabis users (those who used at least weekly) were biologically older than non-users of the same chronological age and were substantially behind age-matched peers in terms of preparing for the health, financial, and social challenges of later life”: a significant decline in the users in physical fitness, premature brain ageing, slower gait speed, older facial age, less financial knowledge, less monetary savings and investments, lower credit scores, more financial problems, less social support, greater loneliness, and less satisfaction with life. All these handicaps by the relatively early age of 45!

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhl/article/PIIS2666-7568\(22\)00201-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhl/article/PIIS2666-7568(22)00201-X/fulltext)

Legalization of cannabis makes people, especially youth, feel that THC is safe, even healthy/natural/organic, and overlook its harms. And the 15-30 gram limits in this bill are

outrageously high for the reasons mentioned by others who submitted testimony. Colorado legalized recreational marijuana in January 2014. By 2015, Pueblo CO had the highest rate of high school THC use in the nation (30%). Hospitalizations related to marijuana increased 38%.

There is substantial evidence that chronic cannabis use, especially during the teens and early twenties, is associated with later development of schizophrenia (a 3 fold increased risk). As many as 30% of cases of schizophrenia among men age 21-30 might be due to regular cannabis use. Schizophrenia is incurable and typically leads to loss of employment and homelessness. The most important part of this testimony is having you watch a 6 minute video (see below).

I am in firm opposition to SB319

<https://youtu.be/bIYMc7t9eB4>

Sincerely,

Landis Lum MD