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## SB NO.1613 RELATING TO CANNABIS

Chair Rhoads, Chair San Buenaventura, 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. SB1613 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 this measure 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 this measure

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.



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

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

S.B. NO. 1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS.

**BEFORE THE:**

SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND ON JUDICIARY

**DATE:** Thursday, February 13, 2025      **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 016

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

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Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads 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  
KE KIA'ĀINA

**BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO**  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR  
KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

**BRIAN K. FURUTO**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'OMŌHALA LIMAHANA**  
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Statement of  
**BRENNA H. HASHIMOTO**  
Director, Department of Human Resources Development

Before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Thursday, February 13, 2025  
9:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 016

In consideration of  
**SB1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services and Committee on Judiciary:

The Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) offers the following comments on SB1613, specifically as to the effect on state departments and public employees.

SB1613 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 70, line 11, and page 90, line 4 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.

JOSH GREEN M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION**

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GARY S. SUGANUMA  
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

**TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

S.B. No. 1613, Relating to Cannabis.

**BEFORE THE:**

Senate Committees on Health and Human Services, and Judiciary

**DATE:** Thursday, February 13, 2025

**TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 016

Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice-Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding S.B. 1613 for your consideration.

S.B. 1613 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.

Additionally, 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."

This revision would ensure consistency with the proposed changes in S.B. 1469, an Administration measure, which would suspend the statute of limitations on all collection activities for Hawaii taxes during periods an assessment is pending on appeal before the Taxation Board of Review or Tax Appeal Court.

DOTAX also 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.

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

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HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

**THE HONORABLE JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
and  
**THE HONORABLE KARL RHOADS, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2025  
State of Hawai'i

February 13, 2025

**RE: S.B. 1613; RELATING TO CANNABIS.**

Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice-Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and members of the Committees on Health and Human Services and 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 1613.

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.

There has been recent testimony by the Marijuana Policy Project asserting that marijuana use by teens has actually decreased in states that have legalized marijuana. That testimony was based on research that led off by a statement from Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Last month, in January, 2025, Dr. Volkow disputed that research, saying that the methodology used in the survey was changed so tracking trends this way is ineffective.

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. 1613. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

**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 SENATE**  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**AND**  
**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025**  
**9:30 AM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 1613**  
**RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 1613. This bill 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 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 Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office. Establishes various positions within state entities to regulate the personal adult use of cannabis. Appropriates funds.



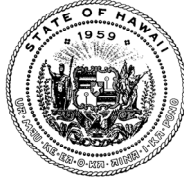
The Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) offers the following comments:

With the Hawai'i Cannabis Law including the creation of the Hawai'i 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, relating to the potential importation of cannabis and hemp plants, propagative plant parts such as seeds, and unprocessed dried flower material into the State, including interisland movement of these materials, may be necessary to effectuate the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office's administrative mission. HDOA will work with the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office to create biosecurity requirements related to the movement of cannabis and hemp plant materials to prevent the spread of pests.

HDOA agrees with the “one-plant” approach provided for in the bill that includes the provisions based on Act 263, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2023 and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, within the new Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office, as those were included in response to concerns raised by the Hawai'i Hemp Farmers Association. These provisions are intended to provide legal support to the hemp farmers and the hemp industry in Hawai'i, particularly those in Section Part VIII. HEMP.

HDOA also notes the inclusion of provisions requiring hemp growers in Hawai'i to comply with the USDA regulations regarding hemp production licensing and requiring compliance with the hemp cultivation buffer zones. This action ensures that no redundant regulations are imposed on the hemp farmers and clarifies that the USDA regulates hemp cultivation in Hawai'i. In addition, HDOA agrees with the language in SB 1613, which makes clear that industrial hemp will not be regulated like cannabinoid hemp.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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**Testimony COMMENTING on SB1613  
RELATING TO MEDICAL CANNABIS**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES &

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Hearing Date/Time: February 13, 2025, 9:30AM

Room Number: 016

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

1 Force, Public Health and Safety Working Group<sup>1</sup>, there are a wide range of public health and  
2 safety concerns associated with cannabis use and exposure. Charts depicting Hawaii-specific data  
3 are attached to the Department's testimony.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.<sup>40,41</sup> 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.<sup>42,43,44,45,46</sup> 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.<sup>47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56</sup> 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.<sup>57,58,59,60,61</sup> There  
10 is substantial evidence of association between maternal cannabis smoking and lower birth weight  
11 of offspring<sup>62,63</sup> 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.<sup>64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71,72,73,74,75,76,77</sup>

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.<sup>78,79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup>

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.<sup>83,84</sup> 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,<sup>92,93,94</sup> 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.<sup>95</sup> Toxic pediatric exposures continue to be reported.<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97,98</sup> 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.<sup>99,100,101,102,103,104,105,106,107,108</sup>

#### 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.<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116,117,118</sup> On September 28,  
16 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning letter<sup>119</sup> 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-<br/>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 cannabis<sup>120</sup>, and an additional four states have pending legislation or have authorized the  
8 cannabis agency to regulate hemp cannabinoid products.<sup>121</sup> 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,<sup>122</sup> 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

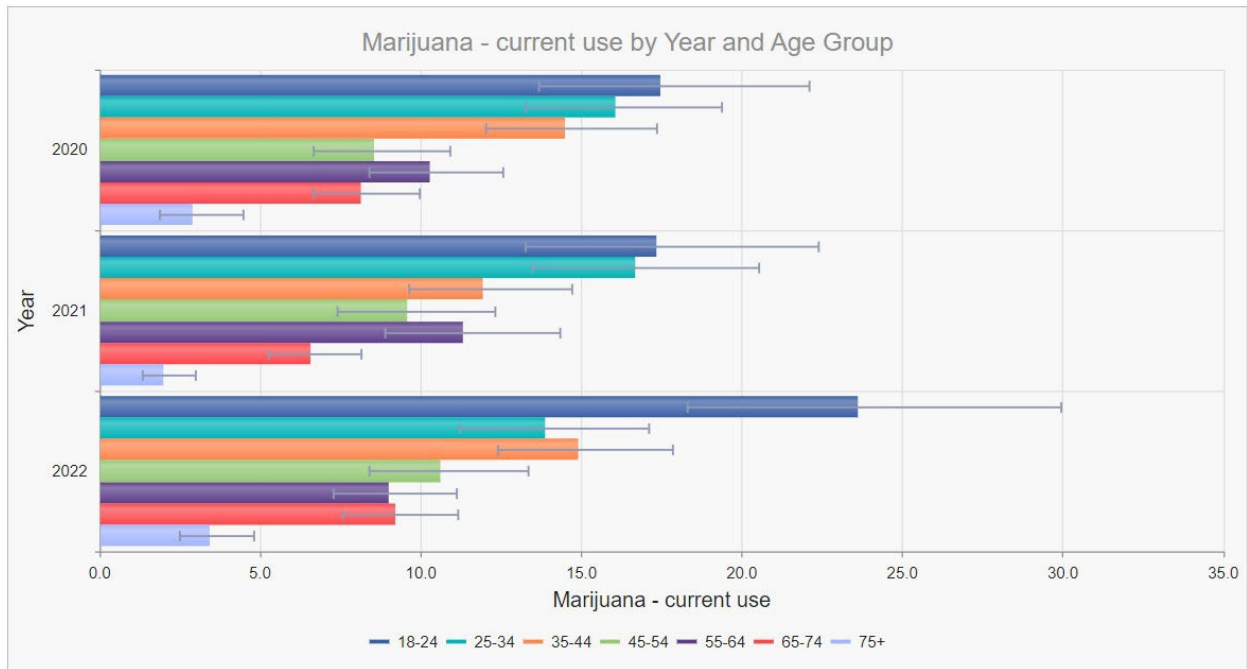


Figure 1b. Method of marijuana or cannabis use, Hawaii State 2020, 2021, 2022

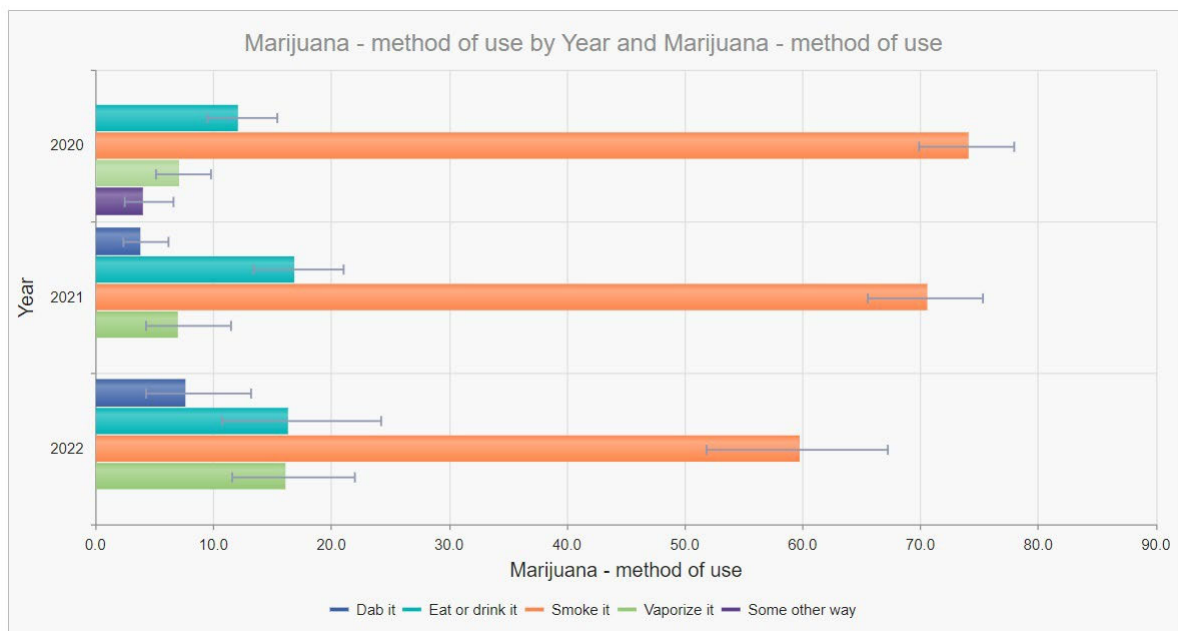
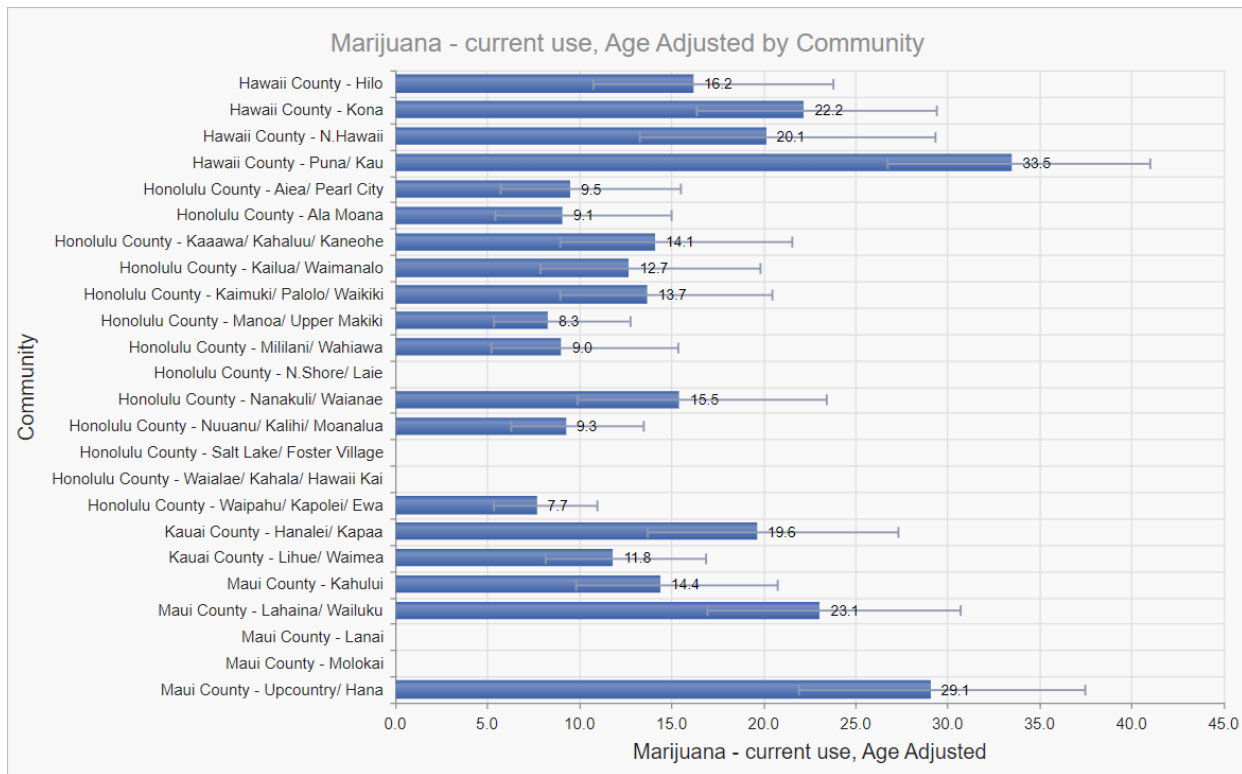


Figure 1c. Adults who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days by community, Hawaii State 2022



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

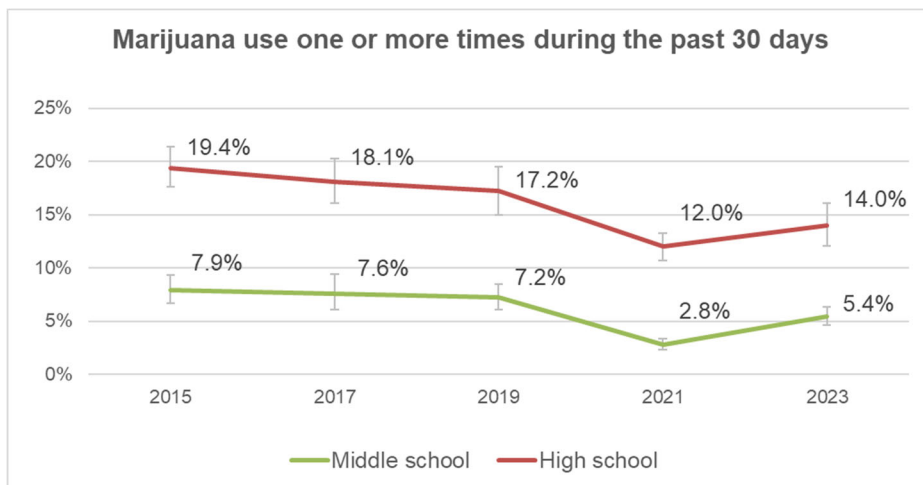
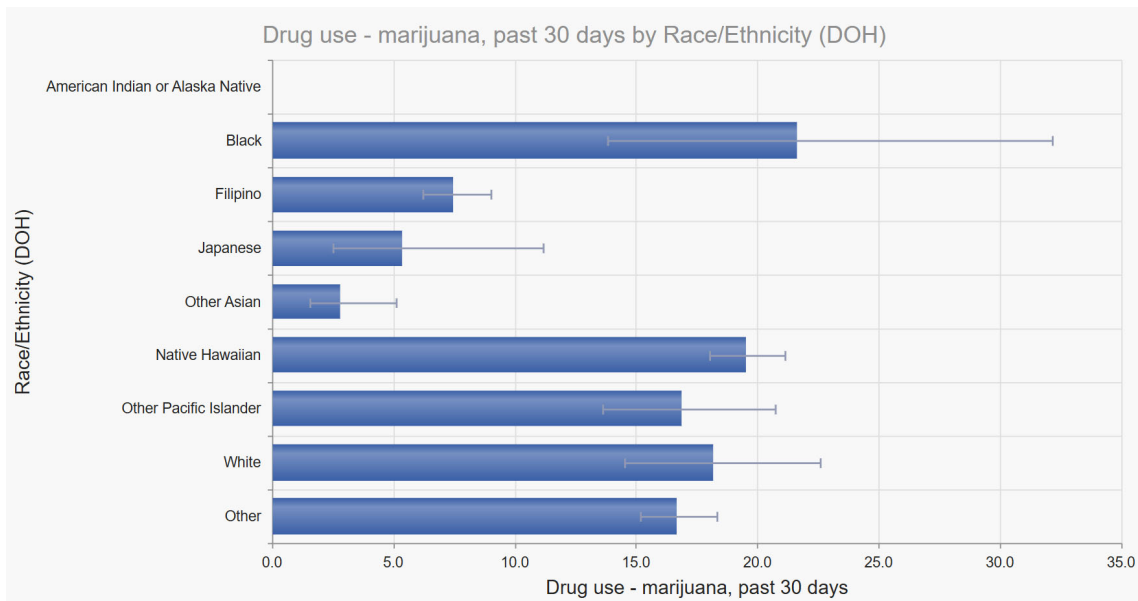


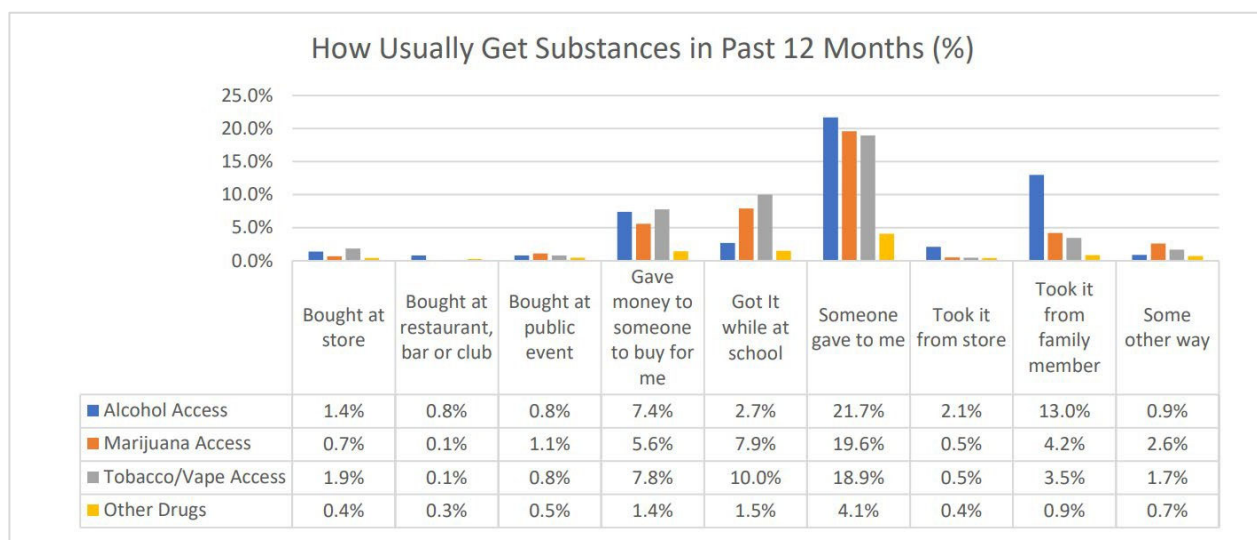
Figure 2b. High school students who used marijuana or cannabis on one or more of the past 30 days by race/ethnicity, Hawaii State 2023



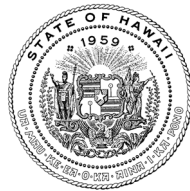
Source

(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 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 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>



JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
*Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā*  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
AND JUDICIARY  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 1613

**February 13, 2025**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Room 016 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO CANNABIS

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

Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 1613: 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.

B&F defers to TAX on the tax revenue projections and general fund impact of S.B. No. 1613; 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 – S.B. No. 1613'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 suggests for consideration that the tax on cannabis products be set at 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.

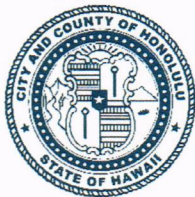
Furthermore, B&F recommends the transfer of appropriations, positions, and other assets from the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and Department of Health (DOH) to DCCA's HCHO, currently set for the bill's effective date of July 1, 2025, be effective no earlier than July 1, 2026, to allow B&F sufficient time to consult with the affected agencies and facilitate the transfer.

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.

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

801 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 529-3111 • WEBSITE: [www.honoluluupd.org](http://www.honoluluupd.org)



RICK BLANGIARDI  
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KEITH K. HORIKAWA  
RADE K. VANIC  
DEPUTY CHIEFS  
HOPE LUNA NUI MĀKA'I

OUR REFERENCE RI-HR

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
and Members  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
and Members  
Committee on Judiciary  
State Senate  
415 South Beretania Street, Room 016  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Bill No. 1613, Relating to Cannabis

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. 1613, Relating to Cannabis.


The HPD opposes legislation that seeks to legalize the personal 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 increasing 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 Senate Bill No. 1613, Relating to Cannabis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

APPROVED:

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Arthur J. Logan  
Chief of Police

  
Raynor M. Ikehara, Major  
Narcotics/Vice Division



**SB1613 Cannabis Legalization**  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb 13, 2025: 9:30: Room 016 Videoconference

**Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Opposes SB1613:**

*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.



Testimony  
Committees on Health and Human Services & Judiciary  
The Senate  
Thursday February 13, 2025  
SB 1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Judiciary

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

Re: In **STRONG SUPPORT of SB 1613**, RELATING TO CANNABIS

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, 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 SB 1613**. This important measure would establish a regulatory framework for the legalization of dual-use 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

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



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 SB 1613.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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

To: Senator Joy A. Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Judiciary Committee

Fr: TY Cheng on behalf of HICIA Association.

Re: Testimony **In Support** on **Senate Bill (SB) 1613**

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 Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Aquino, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Cannabis Industry Association represents a majority of the state's licensed medical cannabis dispensaries. HICIA **supports** SB 1613 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.

We urge the committees not to extend the proposed dual-use rollout timelines as it is important to have a timely start so that the illicit market does not get a head start. A well-regulated program can be built upon the existing medical cannabis program



infrastructure within 12 months. Other states have been able to start sales within 6 months of passing dual-use legislation.

## **KEY FACTS ABOUT SB 1613**

### **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)**

SB 1613 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.

SB 1613 selected some of the best provisions from Massachusetts' dual-use legislation, which was mindful in establishing its program to avoid delays and cumbersome policies given the existing prevalence of illegal criminal cannabis sales. Allowing legal sales quickly was, therefore, vital to ensuring the success of their adult-use cannabis

program. To that end, Massachusetts launched its cannabis commission with an initial appropriation of approximately \$2.7 million and an additional annual operating budget of \$5 million. Massachusetts' was able to issue licenses within 12 months starting from scratch with this approach and limited funding.

## **CONCLUSION**

SB 1613 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.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:03:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennie Foutch	Testifying for Hawai'i HIDTA	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

**Chair Rhoads, Buenaventura, and members of their committees:**

I want to express my concerns regarding the issues associated with community health and safety if SB1613 is passed. Please vote no.

**Cannabis use is a public health concern.** Chronic use of marijuana is associated with an increased risk of cancer, lung damage, bacterial pneumonia, and poor pregnancy outcomes. The issues do not just lie with the user, but with the secondhand smoke and chemicals that expose non-smokers as well. Waikiki is already inundated with the smell of marijuana. Legalizing it will dramatically decrease air quality. Legalization will not reduce illegal usage outdoors and in vehicles. This bill does not increase the public's health or safety.

**Hawaii's Keiki will be impacted.** The number one way that youth of Hawaii get access to alcohol, even though it is illegal for youth to drink, is through their family members. Access to cannabis will be the same. Families and communities need to have the opportunity to have all the facts about cannabis health risks before legalization. A prevention and education program funded by marijuana tax revenue will be too far behind the ball to be effective. We need to focus on creating bills that aid the education of youth about appropriate coping skills and the health issues associated with the use of cannabis. The current bill does not have a feasible structure to deal with the current health risks and misinformation.

**The true cost of legalization.** For every dollar made with marijuana tax revenue, it costs the taxpayer \$4.50 to mitigate the effects of legalization. This includes additional strain on our healthcare, law enforcement, poison control, education, and reduced cognitive ability. For law enforcement, the workload will increase, making it more difficult to manage. It is going to increase availability and use. Douglas County, Colorado, saw a 149% increase in juveniles caught with marijuana in the three years after legalization.

**There are unintended consequences on our environment.** Our environment is already struggling. Marijuana grows and destroys native plants and ecosystems. They use large amounts of what is already a finite resource, water. Only 15% of Hawaii's food supply is grown locally. Is allocating our farmland to marijuana grows the best use of our natural resources?

In conclusion, increasing the acceptance of marijuana possession is not the right solution. We must prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of our citizens. I urge the committee to consider

the long-term consequences that could arise from allowing the use of recreational marijuana and reject SB1613. The state is not adequately prepared for the ramifications of legalization.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:19:29 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

My name is Margaret Mejia, and I am representing Hawai'i Christian Coalition today.

I **STRONGLY OPPOSE** SB1613, relating to Cannabis

I **STRONGLY OPPOSE** SB1613 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!



**LATE**

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

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1613**

**TO:** Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino & HHS Committee Members  
Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard & JDC Committee Members

**FROM:** Nikos Leverenz, Board President

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

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On behalf of Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFH), I am writing in strong support of SB 1613, 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 brining 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.



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

February 10, 2025

Senate Committees on Health and Human Services, and Judiciary  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Hearing: Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 9:30 AM

RE: **STRONG SUPPORT for Senate Bill 1613**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads, 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 Senate Bill 1613, 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. SB 1613 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, SB 1613 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 Senate Bill 1613 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](#)



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, PRESIDENT OF THE RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII  
FEBRUARY 13, 2025  
SB 1613 RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Aloha, Chair San Buenaventura, and Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and the Senate Committee on Judiciary. 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** SB 1613. This measure establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plan; 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. 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.



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

### Testimony in Opposition to SB1613 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 **SB1613** 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.

### **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.

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**



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

# 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?



To: Chairs and Members of Senate HHS  
and JDC Committees

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

Re: Testimony In **Support** on **Senate Bill 1613**  
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 Chairs and Committee Members,

Green Aloha **supports** SB1613 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. SB1613 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.

SB 1613 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



**LATE**

**HIPHI Board**

May Okiihiro, MD, MS  
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John A. Burns School of Medicine,  
Department of Pediatrics  
Titiimaea Ta'ase, JD  
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State of Hawai'i, Deputy Public Defender  
Carissa Holley, MEd  
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Debbie Erskine  
ARCH-MEPS Consulting LLC, Owner

Camonia Graham - Tutt, PhD  
University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu

Jennifer José Lo, MD  
Hawai'i Health Partners

Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Justin Puckett, CPA, MBA  
Humana

Kathleen Roche, MS, RN, CENP  
Kaiser Permanente

Dina Shek, JD  
Medical-Legal Partnership  
For Children in Hawai'i

Garret Sugai  
HMSA

JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native  
Hawaiian Research Office

**HIPHI Initiatives**

Coalition for a  
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &  
Evaluation

Community Health  
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

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 12, 2025

To: Senator Karl Rhoads,, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard,, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: Comments on SB1613,, Relating to Cannabis

Hrg: Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 9:00AM, CR016

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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



February 11, 2025

## Testimony in Support SB 1613

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard and members of the Senate Health and Human Services and Judiciary 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 SB 1613 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,<sup>1</sup> while only 2.6% are registered patients.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Adults should not be punished for using a substance that is safer than alcohol,<sup>4</sup> and which — for many — is an over-the-counter medicine for pain, anxiety, and insomnia.<sup>5</sup>

SB 1613 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.

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<sup>1</sup> [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.

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

<sup>3</sup> [Hawai’i Perspectives Winter 2023 Report](#).

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> "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.<sup>6</sup>

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 SB 1613.

SB 1613 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.

SB 1613 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> (In the other two states, the “before” year was 2021 — which was during COVID shutdowns which significantly impacted use rates.)

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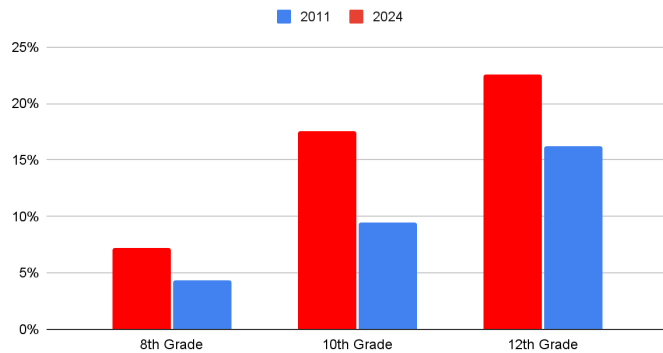
<sup>6</sup> See: Botelho, Diane & Boudreau, April & Rackov, Andrien & Rehman, Attiq & Phillips, Bruce & Hay, Cathy & Broad, Karen & Crowhurst, Peter & Cockburn, Sara & Smith, Troy & Balonova, Barbora. (2021). Analysis of Illicit and Legal Cannabis Products for a Suite of Chemical and Microbial Contaminants; “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

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

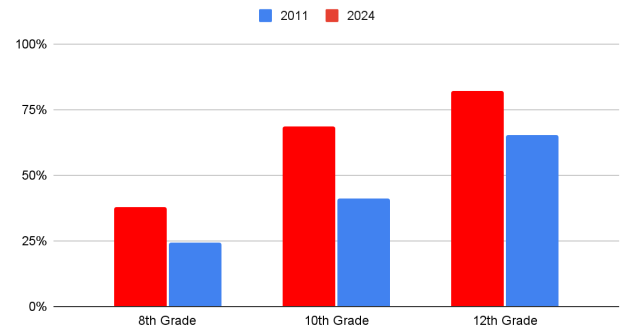
<sup>8</sup> For citations and charts with the full before-and-after data, see: “Adult-Use Cannabis Legalization Corresponds With Drops in Teen Use,” Marijuana Policy Project.

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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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%.<sup>12</sup>

## 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 —

<sup>9</sup> [High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data](#), CDC, 1991-2023. Accessed Jan. 2, 2025. The site currently displays as “The Application is currently offline.” due to the Trump Administration removing vast amounts of public health data from government websites.

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

<sup>11</sup> 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>

<sup>12</sup> “Impacts on Marijuana Legalization in Colorado”, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 2021. P. 4.

which have included education, substance abuse treatment and prevention, and youth development. Through 2023, states' adult-use cannabis taxes have raised \$20 billion, with \$4 billion generated in 2023 alone.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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 SB 1613'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.<sup>16</sup>

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. SB 1613 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.<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 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/](http://www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/cannabis-tax-revenue-states-regulate-cannabis-adult-use/)

<sup>14</sup> Id.

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

<sup>16</sup> "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 SB 1613'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](mailto:kokeefe@mpp.org) for the spreadsheet.

<sup>17</sup> 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](http://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>),

<sup>18</sup> "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)



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

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.<sup>20</sup> (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.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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,<sup>24</sup> and 15% do so at least monthly.<sup>25</sup> 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. Responding to Some Claims by Opponents

#### A. Pathologizing regular cannabis consumers

In his testimony opposing HB 1246 (the House legalization bill), Honolulu Prosecutor Steve Alm claimed, "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." It is profoundly insulting and inaccurate to claim most daily or near-daily cannabis users are "addicts."

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

<sup>20</sup> "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>

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

<sup>22</sup> [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/](https://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/)

<sup>23</sup> "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.

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

<sup>25</sup> "What Percentage of Americans Smoke Marijuana?," Gallup, Nov. 1, 2024.

My husband is one of the many daily or near-daily cannabis users — at least when he is not traveling through a prohibition state. Cannabis has allowed him to better manage his chronic pain, and to dramatically reduce his need for over-the-counter pain medicines, which can cause stomach bleeding, liver damage, and even death when consumed in large quantities for a long period of time.<sup>26</sup>

His situation is a common one. Surveys show most cannabis consumers use cannabis for pain (48%), anxiety (52%), stress (59%), and as a sleep-aid (61%). For most adult-use consumers, cannabis is being used as an over-the-counter medicine that is far less risky than having their symptoms go untreated or to alternatives.

As Johns Hopkins explains, “chronic poor sleep may increase the likelihood of developing dementia, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and even cancers of the breast, colon, ovaries and prostate.”<sup>27</sup> A common prescription sleep-aid, Ambien, now has a box warning reading, “WARNING: COMPLEX SLEEP BEHAVIORS Complex sleep behaviors including sleep-walking, sleep-driving, and engaging in other activities while not fully awake may occur following use of AMBIEN. Some of these events may result in serious injuries, including death.”

While Hawai'i has a medical cannabis program, anxiety and trouble sleeping are not qualifying conditions. And even for Hawai'i residents who have a qualifying condition, such as chronic pain, around \$200 in doctors' and registry fees<sup>28</sup> to be certified is too high a financial burden. And even for those with the means, many people do not want to be on a government list of cannabis consumers — especially given that it is still federally illegal.

Our country cherishes freedom. Adults are free to ride motorcycles, drive cars, eat fast food and sweets, drink alcohol, be sedentary, play football, and surf. All of those carry risks. In a free society, adults should be free to choose to use cannabis — be it for relaxation, for fun, or as an over-the-counter medicine — without being punished by their government.

## **B. Examining the claim that youth marijuana use has increased**

As noted, MPP reviewed every legalization state's government survey data on cannabis use among high schoolers and compared the data from just before legalization to the most recent data, which was released only a few months ago.<sup>29</sup> As you can see for yourself, the data shows a decrease in 19 of the 21 states with before-and-after data. Using the most recent data gives time to see the effects of the market transitioning to legal sales with age-gating and for investments in youth development and education.

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<sup>26</sup> "OTC Pain Medicines and Their Risks," University Hospitals, at <https://www.uhhospitals.org/health-information/health-and-wellness-library/article/adult-diseases-and-conditions-v1/otc-pain-medications-and-their-risks>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/health-risks-of-poor-sleep>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.medicalmarijuanaofhawaii.org/fees>

<https://portal.ehawaii.gov/home/online-services/medical-cannabis-registry/>

<sup>29</sup> [www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/adult-use-legalization-corresponds-with-drop-in-teen-marijuana-use/](http://www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/adult-use-legalization-corresponds-with-drop-in-teen-marijuana-use/)

Some opponents have claimed that a meta-analysis published in November shows an increase in teen cannabis use. But the cited analysis does *not* conclude there is an absolute increase in adolescents' cannabis use post-legalization. Instead, it claims a “difference in difference” between data in legalization states and “comparator” states that did not legalize.<sup>30</sup> On average, they only examined data from 7.5 states,<sup>31</sup> compared to our review of every state. In addition, the study uses 2008 as a comparator year<sup>32</sup> — although 2008 is four years *before* the first two states legalized cannabis for adults, and six years before those states began regulated sales. 2008 is also at least 10 years before 14 other states legalized cannabis.

The meta-analysis also did not include the most recent state data, from 2023 and 2024 — the first years with data after disruptions from COVID shutdowns.

As National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Nora Volkow testified at a 2022 U.S. Senate Health, Education Labor & Pensions Committee hearing, “[L]egalization by some states of marijuana has not been associated with an increase in adolescents' marijuana use.”<sup>33</sup>

Since then, the most recent data has been even more favorable, and shown decreases.

### **C. A cautionary note on health data comparison.**

Colorado was the first state with legal cannabis sales, which began in 2014. The Colorado Department of Public Safety (DPS) issued a July 2021 report, “Impacts of Marijuana Legalization in Colorado.”<sup>34</sup> It included a cautionary note about the shortcomings of before-and-after health data, which also apply to data in other legalization states. It should be considered when opponents point to apparent changes in health data, such as ER codes for cannabis.

The majority of the data sources vary considerably in terms of what exists historically and the reliability of some sources has improved over time. Consequently, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the potential effects of marijuana legalization and commercialization on public safety, public health, or

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<sup>30</sup> Pawar AKS, Firmin ES, Wilens TE, Hammond CJ. Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis: Medical and Recreational Cannabis Legalization and Cannabis Use Among Youth in the United States. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2024 Nov;63(11):1084-1113. doi: 10.1016/j.jaac.2024.02.016. Epub 2024 Mar 27. PMID: 38552901.

<sup>31</sup>Id, P. 1108

<sup>32</sup> “We chose a single-year transition point to avoid making multiple comparisons for different periods, and intended to use the cutoff at a few years before the first RCL was implemented (ie, 2012), to keep a before-and-after comparison period. “The year 2008 was selected as the cutoff point based on exploration of national data indicating that until 2008 there was already a trend toward a decrease in past month cannabis use amongst youth with an inflection point in trend after 2008.”

<sup>33</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAbI3VtTAOI>

<sup>34</sup> [https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/ors/docs/reports/2021\\_SB13-283\\_Rpt.pdf](https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/ors/docs/reports/2021_SB13-283_Rpt.pdf), p. 1

youth outcomes, and this may always be the case due to the lack of historical data. Furthermore, the measurement of available data elements can be affected by very context of marijuana legalization. For example, the decreasing social stigma regarding marijuana use could lead individuals to be more likely to report use on surveys and also to health workers in emergency departments and poison control centers, making marijuana use appear to increase when perhaps it has not.

The section of the DPS report on emergency room visits expands on the significant shortcomings of data in determining if there was actually an increase in medical emergencies involving cannabis. First, the Colorado DPS notes the "transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10 classification system increased the number of available marijuana codes" after legal sales began. It also explains, "Additionally, the data are intended for billing purposes. Use of these codes does not mean that the encounter was motivated by marijuana exposure, but could also reflect changes in patient comfort in disclosing or provider screening practices."

When a substance is illegal, people are far less likely to seek medical attention for an unpleasant reaction — or to admit that they consumed it if they do seek medical attention.

#### **IV. Concluding Thoughts**

While cannabis is not risk-free, it is far less dangerous than alcohol and some medications.<sup>35</sup> SB 1613 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.

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.<sup>36</sup>

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

Sincerely,

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<sup>35</sup> 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.")

<sup>36</sup> 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.

*Karen O'Keefe*

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**LATE**

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Fr: Karlyn Laulusa, Chief Executive Officer, Noa Botanicals

Re: Testimony with Comments of Senate Bill 1613 (SB1613)

Measure Title: RELATING TO CANNABIS.  
Report Title: DCCA; DOH; DOA; DoTax; Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office; Adult-Use Cannabis; Medical Cannabis; Hemp; Appropriation (\$)  
Description: Establishes the Hawai'i Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant...

Aloha Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and members of the committees,

My name is Karlyn Laulusa and I'm the Chief Executive Officer at Noa Botanicals, a medical licensee on the island of Oahu. I stand in strong support of SB1613.

Legalization should really be seen as the regulation that we lack today.

I understand that this topic is very contentious and as such I would like to try and reframe the discussion around facts.

1. Hemp and cannabis are the same plant, yet hemp is overseen by the Department of Agriculture and cannabis is overseen by the Department of Health (DOH)
2. The only way to tell the difference between the two is to test the product
3. The state currently does not have laws that require testing of hemp flower or hemp products for inhalation because those product categories are already supposed to be illegal
4. Last year at this time, there were 10 illegal dispensaries on Oahu, this year same time there are now over 40 illegal dispensaries (Cannabis products have been available for sale at the airport, near schools, and mini marts)



5. There has been little to no enforcement on these illegal operators that have flooded our state
6. The extreme danger posed by these mislabeled products is that there are no established safety requirements
7. Without any safety requirements the consumer does not know what they are consuming or where it came from
8. None of the products are made locally – all products are illicit interstate commerce (overproduction of cannabis that has been packaged as hemp and sold in Hawaii to skirt the law)
9. Many of these products contain solvents, pesticides, and other dangerous chemicals and come with fraudulent test results that provide a false sense of security
10. With no rules or regulations surrounding these illegal products or operators this problem will continue

While the topic is contentious - we need to acknowledge the conflicting realities of having a high barrier to entry medical program and an explosion of illicit black-market cannabis in retail store fronts and online platforms that offer direct delivery.

While DOH recently updated hemp rules to include oversight of registered hemp retailers, many of the illegal operators or resellers are NOT registered as such. Thus, they will remain outside of the department's purview. This is the exact same situation we face today – where the DOH focuses solely on regulating licensees and does not acknowledge activities outside of that. This reflects the way the law is currently written where regulation and enforcement become too difficult to coordinate across the various required agencies.

We need comprehensive legislation that includes the framework to assign a single authority to manage the complexities of this plant at all stages of life - hemp, cannabis, and finished product, also known as the one plant model.

This bill aims to create a safe, regulated cannabis industry with a pathway to enforcement of compliance, rules and regulations that ensure public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Aloha,  
Karlyn Laulusa





## UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

THE SENATE  
KA 'AHA KENEKOA

THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025

### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

### COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 13, 2025, 9:30 AM  
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

**Re: Testimony on SB1613 – RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, 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** SB1613, 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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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS

SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES & JUDICIARY  
February 13, 2025

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, Chair Rhoads and Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the joint Health & Human Services & Judiciary Committees:

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS** SB1613, 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 SB1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Democratic Party of Hawai'i at [legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org](mailto:legislation@hawaiidemocrats.org).

TO: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

CONCERNING: SB1613 Relating to Cannabis

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

**Aloha, Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committees:**

The Kupuna Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii urges you to support **SB 1613**, 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%**.

SB1613 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 SB1613, bring it to the Senate for a vote, and support a safer, healthier Hawaii.**

Mahalo,

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



### **SB1613 Cannabis Legalization**

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES

Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair

Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, Feb 13, 2025: 09:30: Room CR 016 & Videoconference

### **Hina Mauka Opposes SB1613:**

*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).

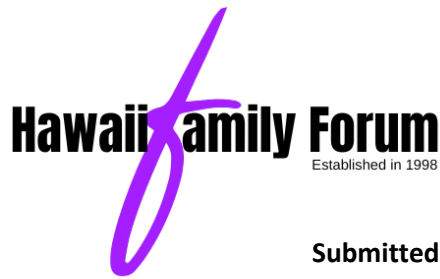
**We oppose SB1613 at this time, due to its lack of education to protect our keiki.**

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, before  
legalization!

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



Submitted Online: Monday, February 10, 2025  
Page One of Three

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

Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

**FROM:** Eva Andrade, President

**RE:** Opposition to SB1613 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.<sup>i</sup>

#### **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 decades<sup>ii</sup>. 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 1990s<sup>iii</sup>. 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<sup>iv</sup>, 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.”<sup>v</sup>

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**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<sup>vi</sup> 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. According to a recent article in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, vaping among middle schoolers increased “significantly” by 3.6%.<sup>vii</sup>

### **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<sup>viii</sup>. 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.”<sup>ix</sup>

### **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<sup>x</sup>. 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.

---

<sup>i</sup> 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>

<sup>ii</sup> 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://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6312155/>

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

<sup>iv</sup> 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>

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

<sup>vi</sup> (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](https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/VapingMarijuana_Brochure_2019_508.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Wu, N. (2025, February 3). *Bills aiming to ban flavored vapes reintroduced*. Honolulu Star Advertiser. Retrieved February 4, 2025, from <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2025/02/03/hawaii-news/bills-aiming-to-ban-flavored-vapes-reintroduced/>

<sup>viii</sup> 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>

<sup>ix</sup> 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>

<sup>x</sup> 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>



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Det. Sgt. Neil Woods, Fmr.  
Staffordshire Moorlands, England  
LEAP UK

Date: February 13, 2025

Re: SB 1613 - Relating to Cannabis

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Health and Human Services and Judiciary Committees

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard and honorable members of the Senate Health and Human Services and Judiciary committees,

On behalf of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), I write in strong support of SB 1613, 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

**LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org**

*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

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.

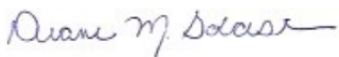
Additionally, legalizing marijuana would free up police time and resources to focus on more serious crime. In 2023, the FBI reported that police made [200,306 arrests](#) for marijuana possession offenses. Most people arrested for marijuana use and possession are not higher-level drug manufacturers and 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 SB 1613 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)



## **SENATE BILL 1613, RELATING TO CANNABIS**

FEBRUARY 12, 2025 · HHS/JDC HEARING

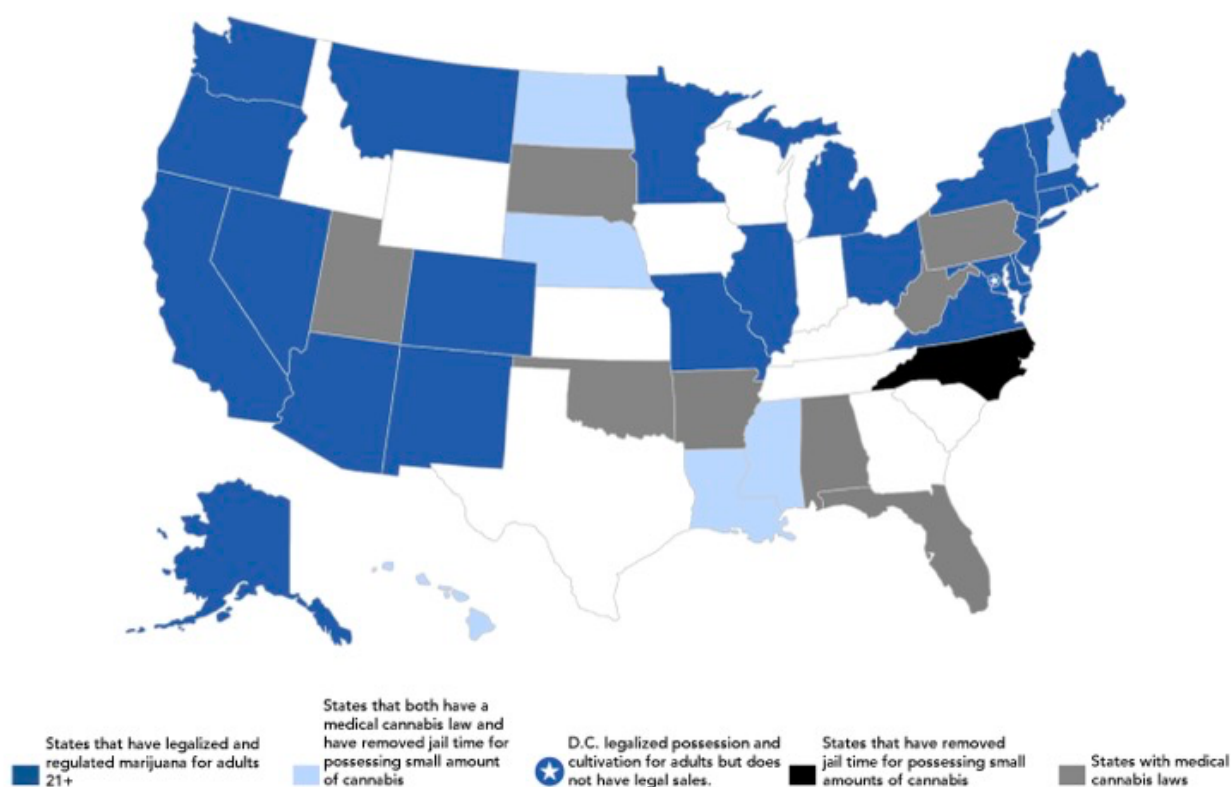
**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** SB 1613, 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com)**



## Testimony in Opposition to SB1613 - Relating to Cannabis

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

To: Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy San Buenaventura Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, 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 SB1613 – 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, establishes a public health and education campaign on legal 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 pose a serious warning of potential harm especially for our adolescent and young adults. They need all their brain functions to develop normally so they have a chance to live productive and fulfilling lives.

Commercial cannabis is an addiction business much like cigarettes and vaping. It relies on consumers repeated and regular use of marijuana to make a profit. While not all users will be impacted, no one knows for sure who will suffer negative brain health consequences and possible lifelong disabilities from the chronic use of high potency marijuana. Let's protect our adolescent and young adult brains and reduce the risk of harm. Why take the risk? NO on commercial cannabis in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony opposing SB1613.

**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.



February 11, 2025

Re: **SB1613, Relating to Cannabis**

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

**The Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii OPPOSES SB1613**

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), a drug abuse prevention youth-serving agency, and we strongly OPPOSE **SB1613**.

Two factors that lead to increased youth use are availability and perception of harm. As cannabis is increasingly normalized and viewed as ‘medicine’, it is perceived as less harmful, when in fact, with increased THC potency, it is become much more harmful – especially to the developing brain of adolescents and young adults.

THC potency has increased from 3% in the 1970s, to over 25% today for cannabis flower, and concentrates can reach 95%+ potency.<sup>1</sup> Legalizing cannabis without THC limits poses a grave danger to our keiki and young people with increased emergency department visits for cannabis hyperemesis syndrome and cannabis induced psychosis.

**Youth Use, Mental Health, and Suicide**

- **Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD):** Marijuana is the #1 drug in Hawaii for adolescent substance abuse treatment<sup>2</sup> 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 addiction<sup>3</sup>
- **Vaping Marijuana:** 12.5% of Hawaii teens report vaping marijuana<sup>4</sup>

Please protect the kids, and VOTE NO on **SB1613**.

Thank you,

Greg Tjapkes  
Executive Director  
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii

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<sup>1</sup> Cannabis Policy: Public Health and Safety Issues and Recommendations. Caucus on International Narcotics Control, United States Senate, March 3, 2021, Washington, D.C. Report, <https://www.drugcaucus.senate.gov/sites/default/files/02%20March%202021%20-%20Cannabis%20Policy%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> ADAD Report to the Legislature 2024, p. 36

<sup>3</sup> Cinnamon Bidwell et al., 2018; Di Forti et al., 2019; Fischer et al., 2017; Pierre et al., 2016.

<sup>4</sup> 2019-2020 Hawai'i Student Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use (ATOD) Survey, p. 38

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:27:27 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Luanna Peterson	Testifying for Reimagining Public Safety	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Support of S.B. 1613**

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Luanna Peterson and I live in Honolulu. I am submitting testimony in strong support of S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis in Hawai‘i.

For too long, cannabis prohibition has contributed to the overincarceration crisis in Hawai‘i, disproportionately targeting marginalized communities without improving public safety. The continued enforcement of outdated cannabis laws reflects a broader pattern—our tendency to commit to policies that lack evidence of their efficacy, draining resources while failing to address the root causes of crime, addiction, and economic instability.

**The Facts:**

- Under current law, possession of more than three grams of cannabis can result in up to 30 days in jail, despite broad public support for legalization.
- Cannabis-related arrests disproportionately impact people of color, leading to cycles of incarceration and long-term barriers to employment, housing, education, and public benefits.
- The overuse of incarceration in Hawai‘i has not made our communities safer, and continuing to criminalize cannabis only perpetuates a broken system.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway for expungement, allowing individuals to move forward without the collateral consequences of outdated cannabis laws.
- Studies show that legalization reduces the illicit market and allows law enforcement to focus on more serious crimes.
- Teen marijuana use has declined in states that have legalized cannabis, demonstrating that regulation is more effective than prohibition in protecting youth.
- Tax revenue from legalization could fund real public safety solutions—youth education, mental health services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

Hawai‘i must stop investing in punitive policies that do not work and instead focus on systemic solutions that address the root causes of economic and racial inequities. Legalizing cannabis is not just about individual choice—it is about reversing decades of harmful criminalization,

redirecting resources toward meaningful interventions, and building a justice system rooted in evidence, not outdated ideology.

I urge you to pass S.B. 1613 and take a necessary step toward dismantling harmful policies that have failed our communities for far too long.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Luanna Peterson

**LATE**

Committee on Health and Human Services  
Sen. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Sen. Aquino, Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary  
Sen. Rhoads, Chair  
Sen. Gabbard, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 13, 2025  
Conference Room 016

RE: Comments on SB 1613, Relating to Cannabis

Dear Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and  
Committee Members,

The Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance would like to provide comments regarding SB 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis. We appreciate that child care, afterschool, and summer programs are listed as eligible recipients of the social equity grant program and public health and education grant program included in the bill. If our state decides to legalize adult recreational cannabis use, it must invest in education and youth substance abuse prevention initiatives.

Afterschool and summer programs are proven substance abuse prevention strategies. They foster protective factors, which are linked to fewer behavior problems, reduced substance misuse, and improved academic performance. These programs provide safe spaces for young people to connect with their communities and build healthy self-esteem, personal agency, and problem-solving skills. Quality afterschool and summer programs also incorporate trauma-informed practices that offset the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Addressing the impact of ACEs, in turn, reduces the development of substance use disorders and strengthens resiliency in our youth.

Research shows that youth who are not involved in constructive, supervised extracurricular activities are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as school failure, drug use, and delinquency. It also shows that teens who do not participate in structured activities after school are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school, experiment with drugs, and engage in sexual activity than teens who do participate.

If legalizing cannabis happens, we encourage the Legislature to ensure that the state invests in youth development and substance abuse programs to keep our youth safe and healthy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Paula Adams  
Executive Director  
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance  
[www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org](http://www.hawaiiafterschoolalliance.org)

AYMAN EL-SWAIFY PUBLIC TESTIMONY  
SB1613 - RELATING TO CANNABIS

Good Afternoon, Senate Committee Members. My name is Ayman El-Swaify and I am OPPOSED to Senate Bill 1613.

Among other related things, this Senate 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. As I listened in on the companion House Bill testimony, I was aghast at the number of mitigations and guard rails that will be required. To me, this alone is a very telling indication, and should pause our consideration of opening this Pandora’s box.

I can’t help think of the fireworks analogy. Some are legal and some are not. We can argue all day that legalizing will make marijuana safer and that our guardrails will keep it from our keiki. I don’t believe it. Even apart from these, there are physical and psychological issues that come to bear...

(1) 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) 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 money be your motivation for committing us to this incredibly risky social posture.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:10:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Scott Kobayashi	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

**Subject: Opposition to SB1613 – Protecting Our Keiki from Recreational Marijuana**

Aloha Senators,

I am writing to you as a husband, father of three, pastor, business owner, and someone who has dedicated the past 18 years to working with youth in our community. I strongly oppose SB1613, which seeks to legalize recreational marijuana in Hawaii. While I understand the discussions surrounding regulation and taxation, I urge you to consider the long-term consequences this legislation would have on our keiki and the future of our state.

My opposition is rooted in firsthand experience. After nearly two decades of working with young people, I have witnessed the devastating impact marijuana use can have on their development, mental health, and motivation. Too often, I have seen promising futures derailed by early exposure to this drug, leading to academic struggles, dependency issues, and increased vulnerability to riskier behaviors. The notion that legalization will keep marijuana out of the hands of minors is simply unrealistic—if anything, it normalizes its use and increases accessibility.

As a father, I am deeply concerned about how the commercialization of recreational marijuana will inevitably target our youth. We have seen this pattern in other states, where marketing tactics, product packaging, and edibles closely resemble candy and snacks that appeal to children. No regulation can fully prevent minors from obtaining marijuana, just as we have seen with alcohol and tobacco. We cannot afford to take that risk with a substance that affects brain development and decision-making, particularly in adolescents.

Hawaii should be a place where we prioritize the well-being of our children and future generations. Instead of legalizing recreational marijuana, we should invest in prevention, education, and resources that uplift our youth rather than expose them to harm. I respectfully urge you to oppose SB1613 and stand for the protection of our keiki.

Mahalo for your time and service to our community. I appreciate your consideration of my concerns, and I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

**Sincerely,**

**Scott Kobayashi**





**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:21:19 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Landis Lum	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Chairs Rhoads and Buenaventura and members of their committees:

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 serving the homeless (Imi Ola Piha). I like most of you have enjoyed Maui wowie in joints and bong.

THC is psychoactive and impairs brain function. 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 causes lower graduation rates from high school and college and poor work performance. There is significant distress, with persistent use despite knowledge of adverse consequences. The high is similar to alcohol: slurred speech, amotivational syndrome (lack of drive to accomplish goals/dreams), impaired driving (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.

“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, brain damage (premature brain ageing), slower gait speed, older facial age, less financial knowledge, less wealth, more on welfare, more 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. Per the CDC, marijuana use in high school is high, increasing from 9% in the ninth grade to 22% by the 12th. Colorado legalized recreational

marijuana in January 2014. By 2015, Pueblo CO had the highest rate of high school THC use in the nation (30%). But look! Hawaii, nearly 11% of 8th graders and 31% of 12th graders use cannabis (Onoye et al., 2021). 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.

Only 10% of users use THC only for medical purposes. The most important reason cited for use: for fun. The use of [cannabis](#) for recreational purposes is prohibited in most countries. On 12/13/24 Elton John spoke out against legalizing weed.

"I maintain that it's addictive. It leads to other drugs. And when you're stoned—and I've been stoned—you don't think normally. Legalizing marijuana in America and Canada is one of the greatest mistakes of all time."

Do we want to leave a legacy of mental and physical illness and lower life satisfaction, wealth and tax revenues among our keiki in order to enable others to have fun? We already have medical cannabis - why pass such a drastic bill to promote recreation? Your most important homework: watch a 6 minute video.

<https://youtu.be/bIYMc7t9eB4>

Respectfully, Landis Lum MD

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 10:10:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

I stand in opposition to this bill, SB1613.

I am opposed to this bill because my heart is for our keiki and families. 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 are saying that it is okay to take marijuana. 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. You have seen that Oregon wants to reverse this bill that they have passed.

If the main reason for legalizing marijuana is for government income, that is not a good reason. **The consequences are too great. The consequences OUTWEIGH that benefit. You and I are here to do** what is good for our keiki and families. They are our future.

Please, I DO NOT want this drug in Our Hawai'i.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:00:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emily Sarasa	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

I am testifying **in strong support of S.B. 1613** 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 will raise millions of dollars to fund **true** public safety programs—youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing. These social programs will address the root causes of substance dependence and abuse in a way that the status quo of punitive criminalization cannot and has not.

The war on drugs has failed for decades. Responsible cannabis use is possible, as we see already with our medical cannabis program. If our collective concern is public safety, the groups opposing this bill should be advocating for legalization, regulation, and education. Education will empower our communities and youth to make better decisions. At this point, we know that criminalization will not.

Please **support S.B. 1613**, integrate feedback from community members, and work to legalize adult-use cannabis this session.

Mahalo for your time and consideration of this important issue,

Emily Sarasa, Kaka'ako

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 12:31:17 PM  
Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel Chinen	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

please say no to this bill. the house already recomited this issue. Please do not vote yes. thank you for your consideration.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:43:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brett Kulbis	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

My name is Brett Kulbis, I'm a 26yr Navy Veteran and Retired Civil Servant. I live in Ewa Beach.

I STRONGLY OPPOSE SB-1613.

SB-1613 threatens the very fabric of our society and the well-being of Hawaii's youth. If passed, it would open a Pandora's box of problems and send a dangerous message to the people of Hawai'i.

Legalizing the personal adult use of cannabis is a misguided and reckless decision. Cannabis, often referred to as marijuana, is a gateway drug that can lead our young people down a path of destruction. Numerous studies have shown that marijuana use can have detrimental effects on brain development, especially in adolescents and young adults. We cannot afford to normalize and legalize a substance that impairs judgment, hinders educational attainment, and potentially leads to more dangerous drug abuse.

This bill adds new traffic offenses related to cannabis consumption and possession. While addressing impaired driving is a valid concern, the bill fails to consider the practical challenges of enforcement. Unlike alcohol, there is no reliable and widely accepted method to measure cannabis impairment. Field sobriety tests and blood tests have limitations, and the legalization of cannabis will only complicate law enforcement efforts to keep our roads safe.

Supporters of this bill will tout potential tax revenues as a benefit. However, the long-term economic consequences of legalization must be examined. The cannabis industry has the potential to disrupt existing businesses and contribute to increased healthcare costs associated with substance abuse and mental health issues. Hawai'i should focus on fostering a robust and diverse economy, not one reliant on a substance that may have adverse effects on its residents.

SB-1613 is a dangerous and misguided proposal. It prioritizes short-term gains over the long-term well-being of our residents, especially our youth. I urge the members of this committee to follow the lead of the House and reject this bill as they did with the companion bill HB-1246.

Respectfully, I STRONGLY encourage you to vote NO on SB-1613.





**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 3:08:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Germaine Meyers	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Please OPPOSE SB1613.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:12:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Senators,

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 OPPOSITION to HB1246, 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 Oregon.

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

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:07:25 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Bence	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

As a severely disabled medicinal patient cannabis has saved my life after a birth defect and brain surgery and as a certified organic hemp farmer and member of the hemp task force, I know it can save farms as well as provide federally legal relief; however, I can't support this bill as it would not help adult users and causes significant harm to the farmers and patients.

The bill is written based on the massive failure of other states including Massachusetts which has had several news articles on its widespread corruption and disfunction.

The estimated revenue is not realistic as Colorado legalized in 2014 when prices were high and options limited, now it's widely available and the wholesale price per pound is only \$100 to \$300 in mature legal markets (California, Michigan, Oregon etc) and it is shipped everywhere.

No state has offered real legalization which would work; however, this bill like all other states just makes limited licenses, over regulation and taxation that will not work and the illicit import market (trap) will continue to flourish. Please work with local patients, farmers and caregivers to craft a local bill by locals for locals.

Mahalo

Robert Lawrence Bence

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:20:19 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Drew Daniels	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Here are some reasons why I support legalizing a dual-use market:

- The majority of Hawai‘i residents support the legalization for adult-use. Recent polls show from 58-86% of residents believe that adults should have the right to choose if cannabis is right for them.
- Most Hawai‘i tourists are visiting from places where it is legal and expect it to be here as well.
- States that have legalized cannabis have seen decreased use amongst teens, decreased opioid use and overdose, reduced binge drinking, and decrease in prescription fills of anxiety medication.
- Prohibition does not work. Currently, Hawaii is flooded with untested/unlabeled cannabis from all over the continent. Right now, Hawaii residents can order federally legal, intoxicating hemp products with colorful cartoon packaging and artificial additives online or from local kiosks and have it delivered to their door with zero tax revenue being collected.
- Last year, over 20% of all drug arrests were cannabis-related. One third of those arrests were on Native Hawaiians. Legalization will free up police to focus on more serious crimes and expunge life-ruining sentences.
- We believe all adults should have the right to choose. If they can purchase alcohol, a substance proven to be far more dangerous than cannabis, why shouldn't they be able to purchase and responsibly consume cannabis.
- We believe Hawaii residents should not have to choose between firearms or cannabis. Currently, 329 cardholders are not allowed to apply for a firearms license.
- Legalizing now will nourish a regional industry when cannabis inevitably becomes legal federally; setting up local farmers and businesses for success and creating a healthy workforce to keep and bring Hawaii's young and talented workforce here in Hawai'i.
- Tax revenue in the tens of millions each year could go to fund educational programs and community resources.

That said, I do think this bill could use some amending. One main point would be the tax rate. We want legalization to encourage participation in the legal market. A 14% sales tax is too high and will discourage both shoppers and operators to want to participate. Over taxation will encourage people to stay in the illicit traditional market. In case you do not know, Tax Code 280E disallows cannabis businesses from writing off general business expenses. I believe 8-10% is a more reasonable tax percentage to start with that will still generate great tax revenue.



## Testimony 2025 Adult Use Cannabis Bill

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and honorable members of the Senate Health and Human Services and Judiciary 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 SB 1613.

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 “<sup>1</sup> to \$82 million dollars with an additional 3375 new jobs<sup>2</sup>). In addition, SB 1613 gives the Attorney General more tools to curtail the sale of illegal cannabis and other cannabis-like intoxicating drugs.

The most common ailments 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, SB 1613 would provide an easy avenue for our adults to obtain safe, tested and labeled cannabis for these conditions.

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 SB 1613 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”<sup>3</sup>. 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”.<sup>4</sup> “Excessive alcohol use was responsible for about 178,000 deaths each year during 2020-2021, or 488 deaths per day”<sup>5</sup>. The risk of death due to direct cannabis use is negligible. Most of these rare deaths<sup>6</sup> 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 separately<sup>7</sup>. 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 cancer<sup>8</sup>.

**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 dependency<sup>9</sup>.

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”<sup>10</sup>.

**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”.<sup>11,12</sup> According to the CDC, “There is limited evidence suggesting that marijuana increases the risk of using other drugs”<sup>13</sup>. 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 have 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.”<sup>14</sup>. 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 use<sup>15</sup>. 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 adolescents<sup>16</sup>.

this legislation with the likelihood of increased adolescent cannabis and other drug (“gateway effect”) use are just not backed by the facts. 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”<sup>17</sup>. 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 use<sup>18</sup>.

**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 SB 1613 as its regulations require 3<sup>rd</sup> 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)<sup>19</sup>. 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 SB 1613 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.<sup>20</sup>

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 SB 1613 this year. However, this war against cannabis use has already been lost<sup>21</sup> 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 marijuana<sup>22</sup>. 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 states<sup>23</sup>, this would have occurred several years ago. Our only pathway here in Hawaii is through the legislative process. I strongly urge you to pass SB 1613.

Warmest Aloha and thank you for considering my testimony,

Mark T. Rothstein, M.D.  
Medical Director Green Aloha Ltd

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://health.hawaii.gov>; Cannabis Tax PIG Report-Final.pdf. Aug 12, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> estimated by Hawaii Cannabis Industry Association as quoted in *NORMA NEWSL*, February 9, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> IOM (Institute of Medicine). *Marijuana and medicine: Assessing the science base*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1999. Pg. 109.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> [WWW.CDC.GOV](http://WWW.CDC.GOV); “Deaths From Excessive Alcohol Use In The United States”. Pg. 1.

<sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> Cannabis Smoking and Lung Cancer: Pooled Analysis in the International Lung Cancer Consortium. *Int. J Cancer*. 2014 Jun 30; 136(4): 984-903. doi:10.1002/ijc.29036.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> *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.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.colorado.edu/today/2023/01/24/gateway-drug-no-more-study-shows-legalizing-recreational-cannabis-does-not-increase>

<sup>11</sup> 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

<sup>12</sup> 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

<sup>13</sup> [WWW.CDC.GOV](http://WWW.CDC.GOV) in Cannabis and Public Health, Key points. Pg. 1

<sup>14</sup> [www.mpp.org](http://www.mpp.org) ;Marijuana Policy Project. Teen Marijuana Use Does Not Increase Following Marijuana Policy Reform. Page 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Recreational Cannabis Legislation, Retail Sales, and Adolescent Substance Use Through 2021*. Rebekeal Levine Coley, PhD, Naoka Cary JD, Claudia Kruzik, PhD, et al. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2024; 178(6):622-625. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics. 2024.0555

<sup>16</sup>*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

<sup>17</sup><https://www.colorado.edu/today/2022/11/04/decade-after-legalizing-cannabis-colorado-here-what-we-learned>

<sup>18</sup> DNA Legal, *A Guide To Cannabis Drug Testing*, November 6, 2023

<sup>19</sup>[www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov) ; Spice/K2, Synthetic Marijuana? Pg. 1

<sup>20</sup>“A Potted History”; *Nature* 525, S10-11 (2015), Stephanie Pain.

<sup>21</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) ;War on Drug Policing and Police Brutality; Pg. 1

<sup>22</sup> <https://info.prp-hawaii.com/hawaii-perspectives-winter-2023-issue>

<sup>23</sup>Perplexity 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

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:31:29 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
jason hanley	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Over regulation, seed to sale tracking, will never favor the small buisness.

Law enforcement for a recreational bill is hypocrisy.

I oppose this bill and it's obvious the authors of this bill are not fully educated in todays cannabis policy nor did they take the time to work with the citizens and thier concerns or needs in a transparent arena

keep it medical.

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and honorable members of the Senate Health and Human Services and Judiciary committees.

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 SB 1613 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. There are many so called "smoke shops" on the islands, selling many different cannabis-like copies, as well as other mind-altering psychedelic substances. These shops are not regulated and not licensed. They will just continue to expand in numbers. Without legislative action on an adult-use bill (SB1613 and HB 1246), it is pure fantasy to think Hawaii is doing something to prevent increased

adolescent use of cannabis and other even more dangerous drug. A state regulated and licensed adult use market is a far better alternative.

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 SB 1613 and for the legislature pass an adult-use bill.

Mahalo for your time



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:28:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mikela Kobayashi	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

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.

Thank you again for your hard work.

Mahalo,

Mikela Kobayashi

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 1:35:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Josiah	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Cannabis should be legal.



## Andre' S. Wooten

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February 12, 2025

“Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads,  
Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Andre' Wooten, I live in Honolulu. And I am testifying in support of S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

I have been a criminal defense and personal injury attorney in Hawaii since 1985, and prosecuted marijuana charges for the City of Seattle in the late 1970's before moving to Hawaii. Having litigated and observed this situation personally for half a century, it is clear that,

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.

Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.

S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.

Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.

Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.

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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Marijuana use should be made legal once again, because the drug war of increased penalties since 1970 is actually insane, not just seemingly insane. Alcohol abuse kills 75,000 people a year. Legal prescription drugs kill 100,000 people a year. Marijuana kills zero people. The statistics for violent crime and accidental death follow the same pattern.

When the Hearst newspaper chain pushed through marijuana and hemp legislation federally in 1934, the paper that Thomas Jefferson wrote the original Declaration of

Independence on, and The 1789 U.S. Constitution, along with the modern U.S. hemp based paper industry were made illegal. Thus Hearst vast California forest holdings became many times more valuable, as redwood and pine tree pulp supplanted hemp pulp for newsprint and paper nation wide.

The 1934 ban on hemp products led to an increased demand for timber and the clear cutting of the once vast West Coast forest, cutting down hundreds and some times thousand year old trees for news print and tooth picks and ruining the agricultural hemp business, which farmer presidents Washington and Jefferson had written to each other comparing their annual hemp corps.

American grown hemp supplied 84% of the fiber in newsprint and book paper in America before 1934 and fiber for ropes and sails and many fabrics in clothing until the ban on this easily renewable corp. Which had deep environmental consequences for our forests and tillable land, by taking profitable hemp cultivation out of the rotation to renew the soil

Twenty-four states, including D.C. now have legislation allowing the use of medical marijuana. Seven states have legislation currently pending. However, federal law and state laws are in conflict and will remain so until such legislation as H.R. 2306 or future legislation just like it is passed. This is a state's rights issue and it's time for the federal government to quit playing "Big Brother" and overstepping its bounds.

It is time The State of Hawaii as well as Congress acted to decriminalize the use of marijuana and here are eight reasons why.

1. Our State Legislature and our Federal Congress are supposed to recognize the will of the people, not impose their will on the people. Even though recent polls show the majority, 56% of the public, is in favor of legalizing and regulating marijuana, and a full 47% of citizens are in favor of taxing cannabis, there still has been no action by Congress. Maybe election polls are the only ones that get attention in Washington.

2. The Global Commission on Drug Policy report admits the global war on drugs has failed. In fact, consumption has increased. Doesn't taking action just make sense, even if we just consider the economics?

3. The War on Drugs has cost over a trillion dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives have been spent. The availability of drugs has increased instead of decreased since Nixon enacted tougher drug laws in the 1970s. In a time our country needs to cut spending, it seems like this would be a no-brainer. But then there are the lobbyists adding to election coffers. And the people in jail aren't making campaign contributions. Seems that in addition to those who have invested in private prisons, local police need that federal drug war money to keep the cash flows going.

4. There is also the cost to states. In addition to fighting the drug war, the cost to jail non-violent drug offenders averages about \$47,000 per year (depending on the state). This is causing a massive drain on state budgets. And because Medicaid covers medical care for prisoners it is a burden to that program as well. Since so many prisons have been privatized they need every penny of profit they can get.

5. Data proves 51% of all incarcerations today are for drug offenses and less than 10% of those offences involved violence. If marijuana was decriminalized, and non-violent offenders released, the privately owned prisons would lose vast numbers of clients and the flow of new clients delivered to them through their customers, the state criminal court systems, might come to a screeching halt. But wouldn't that free up our over burdened court systems as well. Of

course, we need to think of the economic shock this would be to local attorneys across the country.

6. Another reason to decriminalize is racial disparity. Blacks are 57 times more likely than any other group to be incarcerated for crimes involving drugs, but they only make up 15.4% of drug users arrested. Whites make up 83.5% of those charged with drug violation, but a white person is less likely to go to jail. This is simply another clear area where the war on drugs combined with our criminal justice system has failed miserably.

7. Scientific research is another area that our congressional leaders choose to dismiss. At one time this "science" was key to criminalizing the use of marijuana. Relying on "experts," the nation was told how dangerous marijuana was. We were told how violent it made people (it actually makes people passive) and it how addictive it is. Now we learn it not addictive. Cigarettes are addictive and kill people. Marijuana actually is medicinal and helps many who suffer from a variety of ailments. And even more recently we have learned it may actually halt or cure cancer. We are now told it is a "gateway" to other even more dangerous drugs. Let'S face facts, the only reason it is a gateway drug is because the drug dealers are often a one-stop shop for illegal substances. And if marijuana were decriminalized, there would be no need to visit the local drug dealer. Anyone could grow it in his or her back yard, or in a flowerpot inside his or her homes for that matter. Which is why, along with police and investors in the private prison system, pharmaceutical companies are also among those who lobby against decriminalizing marijuana. It might decrease sales of the addictive pain killing drugs that are one of the major contributors this nations drug addiction problems.

8. Ron Paul explains the most important reason for decriminalizing marijuana. Personal liberty. It's what this country is supposed to be about. Freedom.

Slowly, state-by-state, people's voices are being heard and the ridiculous laws banning a natural herbal plant are being changed. The federal government continues in its arrogance believing it can legislate morality. H.R. 2306 is still in committee but with a concerted effort of phone calls and e-mails to our representatives and senators there is still time to get this legislation to decriminalize marijuana passed. It is not just a matter of economics; it is a matter of personal liberty.

Funds wasted on arrests, prosecution and incarceration would be better spent in education and training rather than dead end prisons for the non-violent drug offender. The lack of legal marijuana leads to the use of unsafe manufactured "ICE" and other cooked up substances people would not be confronted with, if safe natural marijuana were legally available.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill.,

Sincerely,

/S/

Andre' S. Wooten

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:55:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB1613.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:55:30 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christine Otto Zaa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly OPPOSE SB1613. Studies show negative impacts to brain function and other bodily functions. Please don't put profits over the health of our communities.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:11:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michele Golojuch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We as a State need to try and generate as much revenue here as possible. We cannot rely on the Federal Government. This bill would make this a reality.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 11:44:53 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Silvana Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Resident of 96815, I urge all of you to prioritize the benefits of legalizing recreational marijuana. You are aware many states have implemented this, and I experienced it firsthand while living in Colorado for 5 years. I've seen the sales tax benefit all state residents. It has allowed many public programs to be funded, most recently reimbursing the first two years of college for Colorado high school graduates, and universal school lunches for all children within 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 the unhoused, to keep our kanaka in Hawaii, help feed and educate children. Within 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.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:27:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
R. L. Souza	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legalizing something inherently bad doesn't make it good; it just makes it bad legislation. The House has already acknowledged this by quashing this initiative last week, and I strongly urge this committee and the Senate to follow suit and focus its attention on the many serious concerns facing our state, rather than creating pathways for even bigger problems.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:32:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

If this bill passes, it will legalize the possession of up to one ounce of cannabis flower and up to five grams of adult-use marijuana for recreational use. But what does that mean in practical terms? According to a pro-legalization website, one ounce (approximately 28 grams) can produce around 112 joints. Within a persons private residence, you can possess up to to ten ounces but not more than two pounds (page 87, lines 13-20)

Although the bill includes measures aimed at preventing marijuana from reaching our keiki (children), experts agree that increased youth access is a common “side effect” of legalization. According to the [Congressional Research Service](#) (May 2, 2024),

"[m]arijuana 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."

The bill, as written, claims to provide penalties for selling marijuana to a minor but lists that penalty only as a misdemeanor (page 95 line 10).

**Reasons to Oppose Recreational Marijuana Legalization:**

- 1. Conflict with Federal Law:** Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
- 2. Youth Impact:** Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii’s keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
- 3. Higher Potency:** Today’s marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains like “Maui Wowie,” increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.
- 4. Drugged Driving:** Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii’s fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation](#).

5. **Persistent [Black Market](#):** Legalization won't eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.

6. **Enforcement Challenges:** Marijuana plants can grow over eight feet tall, yielding significant amounts of THC-laden product, especially in edibles, where potency varies and abuse is common.

#### RESOURCES:

- [Keep Marijuana Out](#)
- [Drug Free Hawaii](#)
- [SAM](#)
- [Focus on the Family](#)
- [Marijuana Igornes Ethical Questions \(Cardinal Turkson\)](#)
- [Ten Reasons to Oppose \(NR Focus.Org\)](#)

#### NEWS ARTICLES:

[\(USA TODAY, January 2023\)](#)

[\(Drug Free 2022\)](#)

[\(Story from KITV, August, 2020\)](#)

[\(Honolulu Advertiser, February 2021\)](#)

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:33:25 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patti Yasuhara	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please Vote NO on SB1613

Mahalo,

Patti Yasuhara, Honolulu, HI -District 18

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:50:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Newberg	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Not good for our keiki.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 12:54:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carolyn DiMeo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:12:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cari Sasaki	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE the legalization of cannabis. This is a known gateway drug and making its use legal will only exacerbate the chronic problems of homelessness and crime that Hawaii faces. Any revenue we hope to generate through taxation of cannabis sales will be dwarfed by the expenses incurred due to healthcare, law enforcement, and social services needed to deal with the fallout of increased drug use.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:14:16 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matt Smith	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii does not need any substances that alter awareness, alcohol, drugs of any type that are not under the guidance of a medical professional.

Simple as that, marijuana is a gateway drug and we do not need more drugs out in the public.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:30:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Taitano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill and ask the Senate and then the House to do so. The points for the bill outweigh those against.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:09:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Boyd Ready	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Legislators,

Cannabis sativa as currently cultivated is much more powerful than the 'weed' most boomers used to puff as rebellious college students. It induces schizophrenia in those susceptible, impairs judgement, is fat-soluble so stays in the system for 30 days at least, is hard to test and evaluate for those driving cars, has increased traffic accidents in states that legalized it, and it harms young people's brains until they are at least over 25.

It is not appropriate for Hawaii.

Mahalo,

Boyd Ready

Haleiwa

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:09:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
kim santos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote no to bill SB1613 relating to marijuana. This bill puts children at risk and will bring unwanted costs and dangers to our communities . Marijuana is proven to lead to more serious drug abuse and community issues. Please protect our children and communities and vote no!  
Thank you

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:18:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Don Baluran	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please oppose this bill and focus on higher priorities such as affordable housing, cost of living, homelessness, and crime. Mahalo!

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:24:17 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Once again, our legislature is promoting the legalization of a drug that causes mental and physical ailments. For some reason, our legislature is hellbent on making drug addicts of the residents of Hawaii. I have seen and continue to see how adults smoke marijuana next to their children (babies and toddlers) without a care in the world. After all, if our legislature do not see and accept the ills of smoking marijuana, it must completely safe. Hewa no ho'i ia 'oukou.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 2:53:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chanara Casey Richmond	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. Marijuana is NOT harmless! Chanara Richmond HD42



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 3:09:08 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Smart	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I most strongly oppose SB1613.

We don't need to establish an office to regulate something we don't want legalized in our state.

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.

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.

According to Missouri Medicine:

1.
  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.”

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.

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.

The reasons given for increasing access to cannabis are not compelling at all.

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 phrase used to make “socialism” sound palatable to the general public. We don’t want “social justice”, we want justice.

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.

This testimony covers only a small portion of the negative changes in Hawaii that will occur if fewer restrictions are implemented regarding access to and use of cannabis products.

Do not pass SB1613. Protect our state from this very bad policy.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 3:48:40 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joseph-paul Akim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Joseph-Paul Akim. As a Native Hawaiian, I strongly oppose SB 1613. It is disheartening to testify repeatedly. Our islands and our Kanaka do NOT need recreational marijuana. This substance has not benefited us as native people; it has cost us the lives of loved ones due to its misuse. Marijuana is the most commonly used drug among teens in Hawai'i, and making it more accessible will create additional problems for our keiki and community. We can expect an increase in deadly car crashes as people drive under the influence of both marijuana and alcohol. We should anticipate seeing more patients in our crowded emergency rooms and hospitals, where those with serious medical conditions will have to wait even longer as the system is further strained by individuals suffering from THC addiction. Marijuana use among teens leads to suicidal ideations, necessitating in-patient psychiatric care. There will also be an increase in black market activity, as observed in states that have legalized marijuana, along with more calls to poison control due to young children accessing marijuana edibles. Who will be held accountable for the lost lives and the doomed future of our keiki due to recreational marijuana? Honorable Senators, please focus your attention on addiction prevention and rehabilitation.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 3:49:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alfred Hagen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I don't understand why some in our legislature are promoting drug use to its citizens.

I stongly oppose SB1613 and urge all state legislators to do the same.

Mahalo,

Alfred Hagen

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

TO: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES and COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

HEARING DATE/TIME: Thursday, February 13, 2025

PLACE: State Capitol CR016 and Videoconference

RE: **SB1613** -- **In Strong Support** of Adult-use Legalization

Dear Committee Chairs, San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs, Aquino and Gabbard and Honorable Members of the Committees,

My name is Wendy Gibson-Viviani. I'm an RN who has lived in Hawaii for 31 years. For 10 years, I've worked on shaping drug laws, advocating for medical cannabis patients and educating healthcare professionals. For 7 years, I worked as a Field Organizer with the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i and served on multiple cannabis task forces and working groups. In 2022, I served on the Hawai'i Dual Use of Cannabis Task Force. I'm a member of the Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform.

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'm 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 non-violent citizens (and their families)—and has disproportionately criminalized and incarcerated people of color.

This kind of 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 SB1613 is that it has a provision 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 – a 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.**

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.

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.**

I am part of a growing network of healthcare professionals who also sees **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 are using 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 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 SB1613. It contains the guardrails needed to support public health and safety. I believe that with good public health education we can minimize the projected harms.

As someone who does NOT drink ALCOHOL because I don't put poisons in my body, I feel that I (and other responsible adults) should have the option to use cannabis, a much safer product – legally.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please do contact me if you have any questions.

Wendy Gibson-Viviani RN/BSN --Kailua  
Cannabis Nurse Educator. Medical Cannabis Patient Advocate  
CannabiseducationHI@gmail.com  
(808) 321-4503



Aloha,

I am very concerned that legalization of another potentially harmful substance on brain development before any type of education is put into place is creating another public health crisis. Alcohol, as a good example, is legal and yet education about the effects of alcohol on prenatal development was completely lagging. Here we are again with a substance that is being considered for legalization, and I am fearful that we will fall behind again in letting individuals know of its potentially harmful effects. Education for adolescents--Yes, absolutely! Let's also make sure that there is education for all individuals considering becoming a parent. Supportive information for both mom and dad, so that fetal development and delivery can progress as safely as possible. I wonder about effects of secondhand exposure to cannabis too and hope that information on reducing this type of harm is considered in educating the public as well.

I am also hoping that we can learn from other states who already have legalized cannabis. For example, putting in a tax for cannabis only helps to fund other education, prevention/treatment efforts once it is already out in the market. These educational strategies need to happen BEFORE legalization and sale of cannabis to the public so that our community can have the straightforward facts in order to make their best decisions.

I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Candace

~A concerned substance use treatment provider and parent

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 4:18:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Uilani Dupont	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose the legalization of Marijuana. Drugs destroyed many of my 'ohana, and this drug initiated their downfall.

I strongly oppose SB1613 to legalize marijuana in our state based on the following:

1. Legalization conflict with Federal Law: Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
2. Youth Impact: Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii’s keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
3. Higher [Potency](#): Today’s marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains like “Maui Wowie,” increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.
4. Drugged Driving: Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii’s fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation](#).
5. Persistent [Black Market](#): Legalization won’t eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.
6. Enforcement Challenges: Marijuana plants can grow over eight feet tall, yielding significant amounts of THC-laden product, especially in edibles, where potency varies and abuse is common.

Cynthia A Dorflinger  
2536 Manoa Road  
Honolulu, HI 96822

February 10, 2025  
4:40 PM

To: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary  
The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Opposition to SB 1613 Relating to Cannabis

Hrg: February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 9:30am, Conference Room 016

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I am submitting testimony in **opposition of SB 1613**, which would legalize cannabis in Hawaii.

We are moving too fast to legalize without enough consideration of the costs of such a policy.

- The costs, both fiscal and social, connected to legalization will outweigh any potential revenue projection. Other states have found that claims of high cannabis tax revenues have fallen far short of what they were promised.<sup>1</sup>
- We do not need to legalize cannabis to reform the criminal justice system. Hawaii has already decriminalized cannabis, which eliminated arrests for possessing small amounts of cannabis. We can remove criminal penalties, expunge records, and offer justice without commercializing high-potency cannabis products.
- Cannabis is already available to those who have a medical need in Hawaii.

The only people who benefit from a rush to legalize are a small number of investors and the large corporations that have moved into this industry.

The health and well-being of our keiki should be our priority. The bill doesn't take into account the cost to our children.

- The Academy of Pediatrics opposes legalization because of the potential harm to children and adolescents.<sup>2</sup>
- Cannabis use has been associated with a negative impact on brain development, cognition, and academic performance.<sup>3</sup>
- Marijuana-related ER visits by Colorado teens have been on the rise since legalization.<sup>4</sup>
- As more states legalize cannabis, there has been a sharp increase in calls to the Poison Control Center, as children unintentionally ingest products marketed to look like candy or snacks. A recent analysis by the American Academy of Pediatrics found in states where cannabis was legalized there was a 1375% increase in calls to the Poison Control centers due to children 5 and under being exposed to cannabis products. They also found an increase in acute toxicity and severity among cases, with nearly one-quarter of the children being hospitalized after consuming edible cannabis products. Drowsiness, breathing problems, fast heart rate, and vomiting were the most common symptoms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, B. (2019). Cannabis Was Supposed to be a Tax Windfall for States. The Reality Has Been Different. *Politico*. Retrieved February, 10, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE, COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, Seth D. Ammerman, Sheryl A. Ryan, William P. Adelman, Sharon Levy, Pamela K. Gonzalez, Lorena M. Siqueira, Vincent C. Smith, Paula K. Braverman, Elizabeth Meller Alderman, Cora C. Breuner, David A. Levine, Arik V. Marcell, Rebecca Flynn O'Brien; The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update. *Pediatrics* March 2015; 135 (3): 584–587. 10.1542/peds.2014-4146

<sup>3</sup> Kristie Ladegard, Christian Thurstone, Melanie Rylander; Marijuana Legalization and Youth. *Pediatrics* May 2020; 145 (Supplement\_2): S165–S174. 10.1542/peds.2019-2056

<sup>4</sup> Wang GS, Davies SD, Halmo LS, Sass A, Mistry RD. Impact of Marijuana Legalization in Colorado on Adolescent Emergency and Urgent Care Visits. *J Adolesc Health*. 2018 Aug;63(2):239–241. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.12.010. Epub 2018 Mar 30. PMID: 29609916.

<sup>5</sup> Marit S. Twest, Antonia Nemanich, Michael Wahl; Pediatric Edible Cannabis Exposures and Acute Toxicity: 2017–2021. *Pediatrics* February 2023; 151 (2): e2022057761. 10.1542/peds.2022-057761

Our kids are watching everything we do and discuss as adults, and it impacts their behavior. The intention of the law may be to make cannabis legal for those 21 and older, but the real impact is that legalization will make cannabis more accessible to kids. It will also change the perception of harm kids have regarding marijuana use.

*“In the national conversation regarding legalization, many legalization proponents portray marijuana use as harmless. Research has shown that perception of harm is a potential indicator of marijuana use and that a reduction of perceived harm is commonly associated with an increase in marijuana use.<sup>6</sup> A study that used Monitoring the Future data showed that eighth-grade students from schools located close to medical marijuana dispensaries (short traveling distance, <5 miles) were more likely to have recently used marijuana compared with those from schools located farther from dispensaries (>25 miles).<sup>7</sup>”*

(K. Ladegard, MD, C. Thurstone, MD, & M. Rylander, MD, American Academy of Pediatrics)<sup>8</sup>

Cannabis use negatively impacts adults. The risks outweigh the benefits at this juncture.

- Substance use disorders, the development of psychosis, and suicide risk among heavy users are serious mental health concerns associated with cannabis use.
- Cannabis can impair coordination, distort perception, and lead to memory loss and difficulty in problem-solving. When driving, THC can slow reaction times and reduce the ability to make decisions. Both Washington and Colorado have experienced increases in marijuana-impaired drivers on the road and marijuana-impaired fatalities since legalization.<sup>9 10</sup>

Cannabis legalization will lead to negative outcomes for our state.

- Cannabis legalization can impact visitor markets where recreational drug use is not accepted.<sup>11 12</sup>
- In legalized states the black market is expanding as they undercut the retail price. In states with cannabis legalization, the illegal market thrives, increasing crime and reducing promised tax revenues.<sup>13</sup>

Please consider the safety of our community and our children and **do not** pass SB 1613.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Dr. Colleen Fox, Honolulu

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<sup>6</sup> Johnston LD, O’Malley PM, Miech RA, Bachmen JG, Schulenberg JE. Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use 1975-2016. 2017. Available at: <http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2016.pdf>. Accessed August 23, 2019

<sup>7</sup> Shi Y. The availability of medical marijuana dispensary and adolescent marijuana use. *Prev Med.* 2016;91:1–7

<sup>8</sup> Kristie Ladegard, Christian Thurstone, Melanie Rylander; Marijuana Legalization and Youth. *Pediatrics* May 2020; 145 (Supplement\_2): S165–S174. 10.1542/peds.2019-2056

<sup>9</sup> Migoya, D. (2017, August 25). Exclusive: Traffic fatalities linked to marijuana are up sharply in Colorado; Is legalization to blame? Denver Post. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/08/25/colorado-marijuana-traffic-fatalities/>

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, T. (2016, May 10). Fatal road crashes involving marijuana double after state legalizes drug. AAA NewsRoom. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <http://newsroom.aaa.com/2016/05/fatal-road-crashes-involving-marijuana-double-state-legalizes-drug/>

<sup>11</sup> Dooley, B. (2021, October 27). *Japan stays tough on cannabis as other nations loosen up.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/business/cbd-japan-cannabis-marijuana.html>

<sup>12</sup> The Korea Times. (2024, May 27). *Koreans who smoke weed overseas to face criminal charges, gov’t warns.* [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2025/02/113\\_375396.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2025/02/113_375396.html)

<sup>13</sup> Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies. (2019, October 19). *Cannabis black market thrives despite legalization.* Rutgers University. <https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/cannabis-black-market-thrives-despite-legalization/>

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 5:33:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lora Burbage	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose this bill. Why would this legislature want to legalize something that does not encourage our local people to become more productive citizens?

I have seen the effect of this since I help with homeless and drug addicts.

The Legislature will be opening a door that will have a trickle down negative effect on many families. Children will be hurt by this decision. This is not what we want in our society! Do the right thing, vote NO!

Mahalo,

Lora Burbage

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 5:55:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stephen Ziadie	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Vote NO to SB1613! We cannot allow cannabis to further destroy our Ohana and our communities! We do not want to be like other cities where you cannot walk down the street without the stench of cannabis. We do not allow smoking in restaurants so we should not allow cannabis here. It's bad enough when us with respiratory problems are out gardening in our yards and we are overwhelmed with the stench of marijuana and it's not even legal ! To make it legal would not only destroy our island but by making it legal you will impose upon my Constitutional rights not to want it in my lungs! You would violate the universal principle that states "the rights of a group of individuals cannot impose undue burdens on the rights of other individuals ". I don't want cannabis in my islands. I will remember you if you vote yes and I will ensure you don't get re-elected. Vote NO

thank you

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 6:15:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
JOHN L PANG	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill. Medical uses I fully support and see the benefits there but recreational use is beyond what our island people can manage. We do not have discipline to self regulate the safe use of these chemical substances. As a pharmacist, the risks far outweigh the benefits to our community. Despite the financial gains, the downside outweighs the long term hazards. As an example the societal consequences of alcohol obviously prove the futility of of self regulation so adding to the list is just plain sinful.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:22:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Julia M. Yano	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

May I respectfully urge you to oppose SB1613.

Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.

Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii’s keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.

Today’s marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains, increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.

Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii’s fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation \[capitol.hawaii.gov\]](http://capitol.hawaii.gov).

Finally, legalization won’t eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.

I trust wisdom will guide your decision.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:36:33 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carm Akim	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard, and Health and Human Services and Judiciary Committee Members,

Cannabis use disorder is the most commonly reported illegal substance use disorder in the general population. Legalizing cannabis will not improve the way this substance is used nor protect recreational consumers and our communities from its harmful effects. As an acute care nurse and active community volunteer, I see that our state and systems are already struggling to address the current drug misuse and addiction among residents. I have cared for a wide range of patients, from otherwise healthy pregnant women who occasionally smoked marijuana before pregnancy and now experience severe vomiting and nausea, requiring multiple days of hospitalization, to individuals who have consistently used this potent drug since their teens and now suffer from unmanageable behavioral disorders. I work alongside others who are still fighting for a safe work environment amid a national staffing crisis. The legalization of recreational marijuana will only worsen our dire situation. These clients, who have psychological disorders caused by illegal drug use, such as marijuana, have been placing a more significant strain on our healthcare system than complex acute medical issues (like strokes, heart attacks, sepsis, etc.). It takes considerable time to care for these clients because they can be combative, putting us at risk of injury. Some can become delusional, even to the point of painting walls with their stool.

Additionally, some patients may lack a medical or surgical diagnosis but remain hospitalized due to the absence of facilities or caregivers willing to take them. Will any legislator be willing to care for these types of patients and be their public guardian? They lie and wait for someone to take them home. We also want to know if any member of the Senate would be willing to work a shift with us so they can understand the daily struggle we frontline healthcare providers face. Strong evidence-based studies have consistently shown that marijuana use disorder is challenging to treat, and not all psychological therapies will be effective, even when individuals choose to seek help to overcome their cannabis use. I humbly suggest that legislature should focus on supporting us healthcare providers in addressing the issues of drug misuse that have afflicted our islands for generations and creating safe work environments when both union and management are unable to give. Legalizing cannabis for recreational use does not justify the adverse outcomes and burdens it imposes on our already struggling community health.

Sincerely,

Carm Akim, RN MSN WCC

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:47:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael A. Cobb Jr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this legislation because it is very complicated and uses industrial hemp as a foothold to allow for pot to be legal. Pot, for recreational use, results in many unwanted issues.

When people get high they will do strange stuff that can be dangerous, for example a high pedestrian is more likely to misjudge traffic or uneven sidewalk and wander into a traffic lane and get hit. People will also give more pot to kids, lowering test scores even farther.

We have enough issues, leave pot the way it is.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:32:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:46:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mandy Chang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose SB1613. 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 SB1613.

Further reasons to oppose this bill include:

1. **Conflict with Federal Law:** Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
2. **Youth Impact:** Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii's keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
3. **Drugged Driving:** Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii's fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the Department of Transportation.

Blessings,  
Amanda Chang of Kapolei

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 9:55:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
donn viviani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am a Kailua resident. Please pass this bill to legalize cannabis. So that it can be controlled like any other substance that has both benefits and risks and for which there is significant public demand. Taking enforcement out of the criminal regime and into the civil will allow more efficient use of Hawai'i's law enforcement resources. Mahalo

Donn Viviani

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:23:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leane Kaneko	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose for the following reasons:

1. Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
2. Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii’s keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
3. Today’s marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains like “Maui Wowee,” increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.
4. Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii’s fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation](#).
5. Legalization won’t eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:24:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Kaneko	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose for the following reasons:

1. **Conflict with Federal Law:** Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
2. **Youth Impact:** Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii’s keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
3. **Higher Potency:** Today’s marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains like “Maui Wowie,” increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.
4. **Drugged Driving:** Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii’s fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation](#).
5. **Persistent Black Market:** Legalization won’t eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 11:40:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

In nearly half the states, recreational marijuana consumption is legal for adults. It should be legal here too. Legal marijuana production and consumption has the potential to diversify our economy and provide real opportunity for people to prosper. This is the right move. I urge the Committee to SUPPORT this bill!

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:16:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Cabjuan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose this bill for recreational cannabis use. It is a gateway drug and should not be used for non medical purposes. Other states with this law did not become a better place to live or raise children. Stop this from moving forward.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 7:27:25 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keawe H Bray	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to SB1613, which seeks to legalize the use of cannabis in Hawaii. While I understand the potential arguments for legalization, I believe this measure poses significant risks to public health, safety, and the social fabric of our communities.

**\*\*Public Health Concerns:\*\***

Legalizing cannabis to adults who are a role model for children may lead to increased use among adolescents, whose developing brains are particularly vulnerable to the long-term effects of cannabis. Numerous studies have shown that regular cannabis use during adolescence can impair cognitive development, reduce academic performance, and increase the risk of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.

**\*\*Road and Public Safety Risks:\*\***

The legalization of cannabis poses serious traffic safety concerns. States that have legalized cannabis have seen an increase in traffic accidents involving impaired drivers. Hawaii already faces road safety challenges, and introducing a substance that impairs judgment and reaction time will only exacerbate the issue.

**\*\*Community Impact:\*\***

Legal cannabis operations may lead to issues such as increased drug tourism, public intoxication, and the proliferation of dispensaries in residential areas. These changes could impact the peace and character of our neighborhoods, particularly in communities that prioritize family values and safety. As a property owner, I have serious concerns about how this bill could undermine my rights and responsibilities in maintaining a safe and well-managed rental environment.

**\*\*Workforce and Employment Concerns:\*\***

Employers in Hawaii may face increased challenges in maintaining safe and drug-free workplaces. Industries such as transportation, tourism, and construction require workers to be alert and clear-minded, and legalizing cannabis could compromise job safety and productivity.

In conclusion, while I recognize the importance of addressing Hawaii's evolving social landscape, SB1613 would introduce significant risks that outweigh potential benefits. I urge this committee to consider these concerns and prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of our community by opposing this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 7:48:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linh Le	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this measure. It has all the components of a strong regulatory framework to educate and protect public health, more so than under prohibition where a large illicit market thrives and is harming residents. The funds set aside for education and substance use treatment are critical. The measure provides for harm reduction needed for individuals and social equity for communities. Mahalo for passing this bill.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 8:14:28 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Fujita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

For me, cannabis is life saving because of a medical condition. To be able to grow my own medicine without fear of retribution is the reason I support legalization.

While I don't agree with the Cato Institute on many issues, anti-legalization folks should read the results of their research on the effects of legalization in other states. This article in particular hits most if not all the issues usually discussed, particularly the objections to legalization by law enforcement. You really need to require evidence rather than opinion or anecdotes in considered testimony.

February 2, 2021

[The Effect of State Marijuana Legalizations: 2021 Update](#)

## Conclusion

Limited post-legalization data prevent us from ruling out that marijuana legalization causes small changes in marijuana use or other outcomes. As additional data become available, expanding this analysis will continue to inform debates surrounding marijuana reform. **The data so far, however, provide little support for the strong claims about legalization made by either opponents or supporters; the notable exception is tax revenue, which has exceeded some expectations. The absence of significant adverse consequences is especially striking given the sometimes-dire predictions made by legalization opponents.**

For those concerned about increased adolescent use, this is from NIDA NIH:

<https://monitoringthefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/mtf2025.pdf>

For marijuana, decreases in use among students are a more recent development. In all grades, the percentage that used marijuana in the past 12 months hovered within a tight window of just a few percentage points in the twenty years from 2000 to 2020. The results in 2021, the first year measured after the pandemic onset, showed that large and substantial declines in marijuana use took place in all grades. In 12th and 10th grades, these declines have since continued, and past 12 month use levels in 2024 were the lowest in the past three decades, at 26% and 16%,

respectively. In 8th grade, the percentage in 2024 was 7%, where it has stayed for the past four years after dropping from a pre-pandemic level of 11% in 2020.

And from NIH:

[Reported use of most drugs among adolescents remained low in 2024 | National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#)



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 8:50:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:11:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Gordon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- 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, the latter two are both legal
- No fatal overdoses reported in the Literature
- 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 SB 1613

Thanks

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:19:06 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Candace	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Candace and in 2023 my son who just turned 18 was sent to Kekela and was with adults because of Marijuana psychosis. It was one of the most difficult times in our lives. And in there they gave him anti psychotic meds that now added to the problem. For one you can't just come of these meds you need to wean off. My son was like a zombie! And the psychiatrist kept telling us to keep him on it for a year. But God, had other plans. We found a place in Arizona to help us wean him off of the psych meds. And this cost so much money that we didn't have.

And ALL of this was because of Marijuana! So I oppose this bill with all my heart because it's just the beginning of BIGGER problems to come.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:19:09 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shirley Simao	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this bill and do not support the legalization of recreational marijuana. I don't believe it is a positive activity within our community and would only create additional unnecessary problems within our society.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:40:52 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Charlie Page	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

What makes America great is the chance that the average citizen's voice can be heard. I humbly request your committee hears mine.

Legalizing cannabis is long overdue.

Decades of prohibition have prevented the research of the plant's medicinal value. Hawaii can join other intelligent states to fill the research gap so a safer form of medicine is available to Aloha residents. There is already a large and growing body of evidence that cannabis is medicinal.

I have read this bill's proposal from start to finish. The measure's strong regulatory framework tries to educate the public about cannabis and will help address polysubstance use. It's a good thing, really. Ask the police in Hilo if the citizen consuming a small amount of pakalolo is causing social harm or the person using alcohol and methamphetamine is the bigger problem. Our officers patrolling the streets in Waianae will tell you the same thing. There is already black-market proliferation of unregulated high-concentration THC products that are not tested, not well labeled, and cause severe adverse effects. Let's separate the good from the bad. Let's legislate to allow the safe, non-lethal, naturally growing plant medicine to be available to responsible citizens. Then our brave officers in the police department can save time & resources, not busting the hippy in the Manoa valley who smokes a joint. But instead locking up a nasty domestic abuser who sells fireworks and fentanyl.

Having regulations in place will help address the dangers of the illicit market. It will also bring needed funds for research on the positive medicinal use of cannabis.

More money and less danger? What's not Pono about that?

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:45:05 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalae Pearce	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Kalae Pearce, and I live in Kaneohe. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Kalae Pearce

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:47:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Stacy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members, My name is Michael Stacy, and I live in Keaau. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis prohibition laws do not make our communities safer. Prohibition of cannabis wastes taxpayer dollars, and tears apart families. Criminalization of cultivation destroys lives.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:09:23 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lisa Shorba	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose this measure. Please keep Hawaii free from even more drug use and our children free of the damaging effects of marijuana use. I also detest the smell of marijuana and having it blow into my home from neighbors who use it. I should have the freedom to not have marijuana polluting the air that I breathe. DO NOT Pass SB 1613. Mahalo!

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:14:10 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Davin Yokomori	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. Recreational use of marijuana, especially in the home, always leads to increased access for children.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:24:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Pamela Bradsberry	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I oppose this bill because use of marijuana is shown to be causal in increased cases of schizophrenia, which most often strikes vulnerable, young adult men who ought to be our hardest, most courageous workers not video game addicts given permission to seek more ways to escape realities of life. The state should be protecting family life and state resources, not continually passing globalist laws that weaken and attack family life and that further enslave the people to spiritual and morally corrupt behaviors and mental and physical death. If enslavement of and destruction of the people is your aim, this law makes sense. But if you look at the troubles and afflictions of states who already legalized marijuana, like OR and CO, sure you'll get praise and tax money for a time, but at the further destruction of families and society as well. Why would you pass a law that is sure to increase mental health patients and slavery to drugs?

Below is a study of many studies that cites there is a causal relationship between marijuana and schizophrenia.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7442038/>

Respectfully,

P S Bradsberry

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:55:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doanh Lu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:04:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Dawn Sprouse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Melissa Dawn Sprouse and I live in Kurtistown. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Melissa Dawn Sprouse*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:13:14 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lee Eisenstein	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to support SB 1613. 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. "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 historical relationship to this plant. Please vote YES ON SB1613. 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 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 SB1613.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:19:27 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Cook	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Amy Cook and I live in Hilo. I am a licensed civil engineer. I spent a decade working for the DOH and currently work for the COH. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis, the current rules for medicinal use and production have not made cannabis more or less accessible for recreational users, not have they made it any safer for medical users. The current regulations for producers are more stringent than those for facilities that produce or sell alcohol or tobacco products. This is a waste of public and private resources and passes on unnecessary costs to medical users.

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. Here are the facts:

Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.

Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.

S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.

Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.

Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.

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.



By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Amy Cook, P.E.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:24:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Winternitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*“Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Elizabeth Winternitz, and I live in Kula, Maui. I’m testifying as a kupuna medical cannabis beneficiary **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai‘i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai‘i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai‘i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Elizabeth Winternitz*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:24:35 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Martensson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Jennifer Martensson, and I live in Palolo Valley. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.
- **With the federal cuts already being enacted related to equity in education, we must proactively generate new funds and better invest current funds. Our police need time to support the diverse communities they are entrusted to protect and serve and removing this burden is a step in the right direction. Our correctional facilities are failing. Let's go.**

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Jennifer Martensson

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:38:23 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i strongly support this bill. Thank you.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:01:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chuck Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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.

Those reasons, currently, outweigh the concern about driving impaired.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:01:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
arielle adenew	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to share my OPPOSITION to SB1613.

The following are a few of the major reasons why I strongly oppose this legislation:

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.

Cannabis also creates an increased risk of traffic accidents. 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).

Another important consequences of this use is the development of cannabis-induced psychosis. Many studies have been done to confirm this.

Please don't let the possible income benefits for the state take priority over the overall health of our ohana.

Thank you.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:11:16 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Summer rothwell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is [NAME], and I live in [TOWN]. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Summer rothwell*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:16:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:26:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:32:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ellen Awai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB1613, although I haven't gotten past the first page and unable to read 128?+ pages on the subject, especially if I don't use it! But I do agree this will be a necessary bill soon, because of what the reality in our world will soon be! Many will need to turn back to the Hippie days, and flower power because of what pharmaceuticals and professionals have been doing to society for centuries!

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:40:34 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mandi deSouza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Amanda DeSouza, and I live in Kailua, HI. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Amanda DeSouza*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:40:49 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lei	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:44:52 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tanner Quinn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB1613, which seeks to legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis in Hawaii. Legalization will not only provide a significant economic boost to the state through taxation and job creation but also offer important mental and physical health benefits to many residents.

As someone who has used CBD products with less than 0.3% THC content, as legalized by the 2018 Farm Bill, I can personally attest to their effectiveness in improving quality of life. Expanding access to regulated cannabis products can provide similar benefits to adults who struggle with various health conditions, including stress, anxiety, and chronic pain. The therapeutic potential of cannabis is well-documented, and for many individuals, it serves as a safer alternative to pharmaceuticals or other substances.

While no policy change is without challenges, the experiences of other states that have legalized adult-use cannabis demonstrate that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. Moreover, when comparing cannabis to alcohol—both of which are substances used recreationally—research consistently shows that alcohol poses greater risks in terms of addiction, health consequences, and societal harm. Given this, it is illogical for alcohol to be legal while cannabis remains prohibited.

I urge lawmakers to pass SB1613 and establish a responsible regulatory framework that benefits Hawaii’s economy, public health, and social equity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:47:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rosemary Bearden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Rosemary Bearden and I live in Nīnole, Hawai‘i. I’m testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai‘i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai‘i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.

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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Rosemary Bearden

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 12:50:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Yukumoto	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to SB1613, which seeks to legalize the personal adult use of cannabis in Hawaii. While I recognize the potential economic benefits, I urge the committee to consider the significant legal and public safety implications associated with this bill. Below, I outline key concerns that highlight why SB1613 should not be enacted into law.

**1. Federal Preemption and Legal Conflicts**

Cannabis remains classified as a Schedule I controlled substance under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) (21 U.S.C. §801 et seq.). Federal law explicitly prohibits the possession, distribution, and manufacture of cannabis, creating a direct conflict with SB1613. While some states have proceeded with legalization, they do so in clear defiance of federal law, exposing the state and its residents to potential federal intervention and legal liability.

Moreover, Hawaii receives significant federal funding for law enforcement, transportation, and public health initiatives. Legalizing cannabis could jeopardize this funding, as federal agencies may withhold resources from states that violate federal drug laws.

**2. Public Health and Safety Risks**

Numerous studies demonstrate that cannabis legalization correlates with increased public health and safety concerns, including:

- **Impaired Driving:** States that have legalized cannabis have seen a marked rise in traffic accidents and fatalities related to driving under the influence of marijuana (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2020). Hawaii’s roads and highways could face similar risks, straining law enforcement resources.
- **Youth Access and Use:** Despite age restrictions, youth marijuana use has increased in states with legalized cannabis. The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that adolescent marijuana use rose significantly post-legalization in states such as Colorado and Washington. This contradicts the bill’s intent to regulate access effectively.
- **Mental Health Concerns:** Medical research has linked cannabis use to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and psychosis, particularly among young adults (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). Increased accessibility under SB1613 could exacerbate Hawaii’s already-strained mental health system.

### **3. Economic Costs Outweigh Potential Revenue**

While proponents argue that legal cannabis will generate tax revenue, empirical data from other states indicate that the costs associated with regulation, enforcement, and public health issues often outweigh the benefits. Colorado and California, for example, have faced significant regulatory challenges, black-market activity, and enforcement costs that diminish expected revenues. Moreover, Hawaii's tourism industry, which relies heavily on a family-friendly and pristine image, could suffer reputational damage.

### **4. Increased Burden on Law Enforcement**

Hawaii's law enforcement agencies will face added responsibilities, including monitoring dispensaries, regulating personal possession limits, and enforcing new impaired driving laws. Given existing resource constraints, legalization could overburden police departments, courts, and correctional facilities, ultimately diverting attention from more pressing public safety concerns.

### **Conclusion**

Given the legal conflicts with federal law, public health risks, economic uncertainties, and increased burden on law enforcement, SB1613 presents significant risks to Hawaii. Rather than proceeding with full legalization, I urge the committee to consider alternative approaches, such as decriminalization without commercialization or enhanced public health initiatives focused on prevention and education.

I respectfully request that the committee **reject** SB1613 in its current form. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:13:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Camille Adams	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Too addictive. Studies show it ruins lives and families. Stop helping people destroy themselves and their families.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:21:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cypriano Way	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The presence and usage of cannabis throughout the State of Hawaii is an unchangeable fact of life. It would be a waste of the State's resources to continue the cycle of mass incarceration for Native Hawaiians, who through systemic challenges, are arrested and imprisoned at an unequal and discriminatory rate for illegal possession of cannabis. The State has the opportunity to involve itself in the recreational cannabis industry, with the potential to be an additional source of tax revenue. I encourage all members of the HHS/JDC committee to support SB1613's passage and join the rest of the States on providing forward-thinking leadership on the issue that is the legal status of recreational cannabis.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:28:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alex Toomata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Free the plant!!I should be able to cultivate cannabis without fear of losing my freedom.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:47:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marlene Magallanes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**\*\*Testimony in Support of Legalizing Marijuana in Hawaii\*\***

Aloha Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the legalization of marijuana in the state of Hawaii. As a resident of this beautiful state, I believe that legalizing marijuana would provide significant benefits to our community, economy, and public health.

First, marijuana legalization offers a powerful opportunity for economic growth. With tourism being a cornerstone of Hawaii’s economy, the introduction of a regulated marijuana market would create jobs, generate substantial tax revenue, and stimulate local businesses. Neighboring states that have legalized marijuana have seen millions in tax revenue, much of which has been reinvested into public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure—benefits that Hawaii could equally enjoy.

Second, marijuana legalization offers a path to reduce the burden on our criminal justice system. Currently, the enforcement of marijuana-related offenses disproportionately affects certain communities. Legalization would enable law enforcement to focus resources on more serious crimes and reduce the number of people incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. Furthermore, it would allow individuals with prior marijuana convictions to have their records expunged, providing a second chance to rebuild their lives.

Additionally, marijuana has proven medicinal properties that can greatly improve the quality of life for those suffering from chronic conditions. Hawaii has a growing medical marijuana program, and expanding access to recreational marijuana would provide relief for many residents who seek a natural alternative to pharmaceutical drugs. Legalization would also ensure safer, regulated access to marijuana, reducing the risks associated with the black market.

Finally, the cultural and historical context of cannabis in Hawaii should not be overlooked. Native Hawaiians have used plants like cannabis for medicinal and spiritual purposes for centuries. Legalizing marijuana would honor this legacy and allow the people of Hawaii to reclaim the opportunity to use the plant in a safe, controlled manner.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support the legalization of marijuana in Hawaii. By doing so, we will promote economic growth, enhance public health, and create a more just society for all.



Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Marlene Magallanes  
Kapolei, HI  
714-349-6790

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:49:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Puppione	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Greg, and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Greg*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:56:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nelson JenksPuaa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Nelson JenksPuaa and I am in support of SB 1613. Make recreational consumption for responsible adults legal.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 1:58:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Gonzales	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Decriminalization. Medicinal Medical Marijuana is outlawed because of Anslinger deporting illegal Mexican migrant workers a hundred years ago to save his federal government money and pass the responsibility to the south west states. Propaganda that realized making Mota illegal, it was easier to round them up and blame it on the weed. Illegal immigrants are illegal. It is bad politics.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 2:32:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexis Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Alexis Nguyen and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,  
Alexis Nguyen

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 2:33:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Pullman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I'm a decades-long cannabis user as well as an attorney, working as a public defender on Maui. I moved to Hawaii five years ago from California and was shocked to find out that Hawaii still requires users to get a doctor's note to use cannabis legally. Getting a medical marijuana recommendation costs \$250/yr. and requires jumping through several hoops. Of course, folks in the lower echelons of society, young, poor, carless, homeless, etc. never navigate those hoops and so they are exposed to criminal prosecution. I see it all too often in the courtrooms on Maui. Meanwhile far more harmful drugs like alcohol and tobacco are legal.

We could sure use the revenue that legal cannabis would generate. As an underpaid state employee, I would like a well-deserved raise. Instead, we waste police and corrections resources on prosecutions for cannabis. Moving to Hawaii felt like returning to a medeival era where the law hasn't caught up with the times. It's about time that Hawaii ends cannabis prohibition and regulates adult use like they did in every other "blue state" in the country, as well as "red states" Arizona, Alaska, and Missouri. Thank you. - David Pullman





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WENDYHUDSONLAW.COM

February 11, 2025

RE: S.B. 1613

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Wendy Hudson and I live Makawao and work in Wailuku. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

As a criminal defense attorney, I see how difficult it is for people who have been convicted of Marijuana Possession to move forward and prosper in their lives. The stigma of the conviction follows them wherever they apply for work and even prevents them from being hired.

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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

*/s/ Wendy A. Hudson*

Wendy A. Hudson

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 2:45:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ken Obenski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The war on Cannabis just creates criminals.

I was wrong. I now see the error of my ways. I thought of the war on drugs as pointless and ineffective. I now see it as perfect for what it is intended to do. Look what would happen if we ended the war.

We have built the world's largest prison system; we have to keep it and all the people and contractors it employs busy. What would we do with all those people warehoused in prison? Would they join the ranks of the unemployed, or become just be petty criminals? Of course they might just rejoin their families and settle into a mundane but legal job.

In addition to prisons we have courts, judges and their other employees that depend on the jobs it creates. Without low level drug users to plea bargain prosecutors would have to work much harder to maintain their important win/lose ratio. Thousands of defense lawyers depend on the drug trials for easily earned income with no remorse for failure. Otherwise we might be able to actually have prompt speedy trials for those issues our justice system was designed for.

Police at every level from local departments to FBI have become dependent on the opportunities it provides, advancement, excitement, publicity, overtime, free drugs, bigger budgets and the cash and toys that civil asset forfeiture provides: cars, boats, aircraft, electronics, and weapons.

The small arms industry depends on equipment, gun and ammunition sales to police and organized crime to stay in business and employ thousands of people. Add to that the military equipment industries need to sell helicopters and armored trucks to SWAT teams in every city, village and hamlet. Your police department is just not up to date without its own tank.

The economies of several countries, and counties in the US, are dependent on the high prices they get for crops that produce an illegal product. What will they do when cocaine and marijuana bring the same price as oregano and tobacco? Legal drugs would deprive independent vendors of a major source of tax free income. On the other hand it appears that some states are finding that taxing marijuana is more cost effective than trying to outlaw it.

All the hoopla about illegal drugs distracts people from the tobacco and alcohol industries, and the pervasive and harmful effects of their products. Constant news coverage of the War pushes news about the harmful effects of alcohol and tobacco off the front page. Celebrity scandals

about illegal drug usage are almost as interesting as sex. Rehab is so much more newsworthy when it is paralleled with a threat of jail time.

Pharmaceutical companies can justify the high prices of their mass produced product on the comparably high price of street drugs. How could oxycodone compete with legal codeine or even safer, more effective grow your own marijuana? Hundreds of chemists, now busy designing drugs (prescription and illegal) around the controlled substances act would be redundant.

The drug test industry employs thousands. Employers need a simple reason to reject minority applicants "You failed the drug test". Since marijuana usage is somewhere between 50 and 80% and can be detected for months, this is almost always credible, and impossible to rebut, although often meaningless.

Political contributions from all those with vested interest in the drug war would stop, then what would all the campaign service providers do without the Mothers-milk of politics? War of any kind provides speech material for *polidioticians*, "We need to work harder, we're seeing the light the end of the tunnel, can't stop now." Gets more votes than, "300 million Americans are quietly behaving themselves."

In fewer words, the war on drugs has so thoroughly pervaded our culture that we, or at least our ruling class, can't live without it any more than they could live without their own hypocrisy. It is a small part of the basis of popular politics: keep the public alarmed with an endless series of boogie-men preferably imaginary, or manufactured as necessary to the needs, of the reelection cycle.

The War on Drugs has taken combat mentality into the streets of America. We need to end the insanity by decriminalizing things that really have no business being crimes in the first place, starting with organic drugs like marijuana.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 3:17:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jared Ono	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

For over a decade I have been hopeful that Hawai`i will finally make the logical and intelligent decision to legalize recreational marijuana for the state. Over the years, we've seen state after state legalizing marijuana. While there were many fears at first, these fears proved to be false as the legal marijuana business has only helped states thrive with private businesses and tax revenue. Furthermore, while Hawai`i has decriminalized a small amount of marijuana, there are still people being charged with crimes for simple possession of a few grams of plant matter.

I was arrested for marijuana as a teenager and I have since gone on to graduate law school and become an attorney. The arrest only taught me how outdated and regressive these marijuana laws are.

I have also heard how there are concerns about tourists being bothered by the marijuana if it were legalized. First of all, legalizing marijuana does not suddenly mean it becomes legal to smoke it everywhere, so if the concern is about smoke or odor, then simply enforce current smoking laws. Common sense also would explain that legal recreational marijuana would boost tourism, not decrease it, as people would get to try something that they normally don't get to enjoy at home.

If the State does not care about anything else, then it should at least see the benefit of the influx of tax dollars a legal marijuana business would bring. Marijuana use is prevalent regardless of whether it is legal or not, so the State is just missing out on thousands of extra dollars by maintaining these old restrictive laws. Look at how other states have benefited, look at how medical patients have benefited, look at how our over-populated justice system benefits, and the countless other positive changes legalized recreational marijuana has brought others, and please consider passing this bill.

Jared H. Ono

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 4:03:52 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you for serving our Hawai'i. I appreciate all you do. As a mom of 3, teacher, and pastor's wife, I stand in strong opposition to SB 1613 for the reasons below:

- 1. Conflict with Federal Law:** Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Allowing ten ounces (or up to two pounds of marijuana) in homes—far beyond the need for personal use.
- 2. Youth Impact:** Increased availability will lead to higher use among Hawaii's keiki, who already struggle with e-cigarette usage. States with legalized marijuana have reported spikes in ER visits by children.
- 3. Higher Potency:** Today's marijuana has far higher THC levels than older strains like "Maui Wowie," increasing the risk of abuse and adverse effects.
- 4. Drugged Driving:** Marijuana-related incidents already account for 22% of Hawaii's fatal crashes (2013–2017), according to the [Department of Transportation](#).
- 5. Persistent Black Market:** Legalization won't eliminate illegal sales, which will continue to evade taxes and target youth.
- 6. Enforcement Challenges:** Marijuana plants can grow over eight feet tall, yielding significant amounts of THC-laden product, especially in edibles, where potency varies and abuse is common.

Please take a look at this informational video explaining why this bill would be detrimental to our Hawaii: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhRV99H4ANY&authuser=1>

Thank you for your time.

Blessings,

Erin Chinen

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 4:12:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Witten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Leslie Witten and I live in Waialua. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Leslie Witten

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 4:20:00 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Will	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of legalizing adult-use of cannabis in Hawaii. I trust the Legislature will work out the right details and conditions for our state.

In general, I support the following points or issues around cannabis.

- The safety of our youth is paramount. Regulate cannabis like cigarettes and alcohol.
- Social Equity provisions
- Expungement and pardons for cannabis-related non-violent crimes
- Zero or minimal funding for law enforcement. Treat cannabis like alcohol and cigarettes.
- I support homegrown cannabis with limits on plants grown
- Allow dispensaries to sell medical cannabis with no tax
- Allow dispensaries to sell adult-use cannabis w/reasonable tax not too high (pardon the pun)
- No smoking cannabis is public (public parks, beaches, sidewalks, facilities, buildings)
- Allow commercial cannabis lounges (hotels, nightclubs, restaurants, bars)

THANKS for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Will Espero

Retired State Senator



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 6:06:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Abbey Seitz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Abbey, and I live in Palolo. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.
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- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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 **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Abbey

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 6:33:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bronson Teixeira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this bill, mahalo.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 6:40:14 PM  
Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brytni K-aloha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Brytni K-aloha, and I live in Ola‘a, Hawai‘i. I’m testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai‘i.*
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- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai‘i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai‘i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Brytni K-aloha*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 6:51:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
James T Yamada	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HI STATE TESTIMONY AGAINST MARIJUANA

SB 1613

2/13/25

MY NAME IS JAMES YAMADA

I AM OPPOSED TO SB1613. I AM AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR AS WELL AS A PASTOR IN A CHURCH THAT RUNS A TRANSITIONAL HOME FOR ADDICTS WHO WANT TO GET WELL.

I AM FAMILIAR WITH THE EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA, THE HOMELESS, ADULTS IN THE WORK PLACE, ESPECIALLY OUR YOUTH.

I AM ALSO AWARE OF THE CONCEPT THAT CHILDHOOD TRAUMA WHICH AFFECTS NEARLY ALL PEOPLE, SOME WORSE THAN OTHERS, HAS ON THE MINDS OF PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS.

THERE IS A STUDY DONE BY KAISER PERMANENTE IN THE 1980S CALLED "ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES" STUDY

IT DOCUMENTS THAT ANYONE EXPOSED TO A HIGH DEGREE OF:

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE

ABUSE AGAINST THE MOTHER

OR LIVING IN A HOUSEHOLD WITH MEMBERS WHO WERE:

SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

MENTALLY ILL

SUICIDAL

OR IMPRISONED

THOSE WHO WERE EXPOSED TO 4 OR MORE OF THESE EXPERIENCES WERE BETWEEN 4-12 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE INCREASED HEALTH RISKS FOR ALCOHOLISM, DRUG ABUSE, DEPRESSION, SUICIDE, ETC... CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

MEDICAL DR GABOR MATE IN HIS GROUND BREAKING BOOK THE BOOK "IN THE REALM OF HUNGRY GHOSTS" DOCUMENTS THAT ANYONE WITH CHILDHOOD TRAUMA HAS A HIGH LIKELY HOOD OF USING DRUGS TO TRY TO DEAL WITH THE TRAUMA THAT IS IMPLANTED IN THEIR BRAINS.

HE PRESENTS THE CASE THAT THEIR IMPLICIT MEMORY DOESN'T REMEMBER THE EARLY TRAUMATIC EVENTS BUT THEY DEVELOP HABITS THAT TURN TO DRUGS, MARIJUANA, ETC IN ORDER TO DESENSITIZE THEIR MINDS SO THEY CAN SURVIVE THE DAY.

THE WAY THEY SEE LIFE IS THROUGH THE NEGATIVE LENS OF THEIR EYES.

IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT MARIJUANA IS ONE OF THE ENTRY WAY DRUG THEY TURN TO.

YOUTH THEN DON'T AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THE "SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING" CONCEPTS IN SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONCEPTS THAT SHOULD HELP THEM DEAL WITH TRAUMA. LOSE HOPE IN THE OPPORTUNITIES LIFE SHOULD HAVE FOR THEM.

THEIR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES BECOMES STUNTED AND THEIR TEST SCORES PLUMMET... AND MANY ARE ESSENTIALLY DESTROYED.

PLEASE DO NOT PASS A BILL THAT WILL FOSTER THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR YOUTH.

PASTOR JAMES (JIMMY) YAMADA

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 7:39:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
james wallace	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB1613.I hate pakalolo,never tried pakaloo and never will.I hate drugs and people who sell them.Pakaloo will make you lolo,but people who like this bill LOVE money as well.Dont pass this Lolo bill.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 8:14:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynn Murakami Akatsuka	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose SB 1613 Relating to Cannabis. Especially the legalization of the personal adult use of cannabis. This bill increases the risk of impaired driving that may cause death and disabilities to self and others on the road. As well as an increase of mental health issues in our youths in their developmental stages if they obtain access to it. Please keep "Hawaii Safe for Everyone" and let us be truly representative as the "Health State in the Nation."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition of SB 1613.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 8:41:25 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Drew Erickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Key Issues with SB1613: Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office**

Establishing The Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office raises significant concerns about governance, accountability, and equitable representation. If left unaddressed, these issues could hinder the fair development of Hawai‘i’s cannabis industry and disadvantage local farmers and small businesses.

**1. Lack of Independence and Local Representation**

- The office is within the **Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA)** but lacks direct oversight, which can create accountability issues.
- No provisions require representation from **local farmers, small businesses, or community stakeholders**, so key voices are excluded from decision-making.
- The structure centralizes power under a **single administrator** rather than fostering community-driven oversight through a **diverse coalition or board**.

**2. Politicized Leadership with No Stability**

- The **governor appoints the administrator** with no fixed term, meaning leadership can change with each administration, causing instability.
- The administrator serves **at the governor’s discretion**, leaving room for political influence over industry regulations.
- There are **no checks and balances** to ensure the Hemp and Cannabis office makes decisions that will be in the best interest of local 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 representation from growers, dispensaries, Native Hawaiian organizations, legal professionals, and financial experts, **this bill lacks structured community input**.
- The bill **does not mandate the prioritization** of local farmers or social equity applicants, increasing the risk of **corporate and outside interests dominating** the industry.

## Conclusion

SB1613, as written, fails to provide a fair and sustainable framework for Hawai'i's cannabis industry. To ensure a **community-driven, locally controlled** market, the bill must include:

- ✔ **Independent governance with structured community representation**
- ✔ **Stable leadership beyond political cycles**
- ✔ **Explicit social equity provisions prioritizing local farmers and small businesses**

Without these changes, Hawai'i risks **repeating past mistakes**, sidelining local entrepreneurs, and losing control of an industry that should serve **Hawai'i's people first**.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:18:41 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Hayashida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony Opposing SB1613 (Relating to Cannabis)**

Chairperson, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB1613, which seeks to among many things, legalize recreational marijuana in the State of Hawaii. I come before you today as a former family 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 family 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 SB1613 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 SB1613. 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,

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:19:08 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Vincent Keanu Revilla Castaneto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Vincent Keanu Revilla Castaneto and I live in Makawao, HI. I'm testifying in support of S.B.

1613 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.

- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.

- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.

- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.

- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.

- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Vincent KR Castaneto

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:39:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kacey Fujino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kacey Fujino and I live in palolo valley. I am submitting testimony in support of this bill.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 7:53:46 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leah Morse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*“Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Leah Morse, and I live in Honolulu. I’m testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- *Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai‘i.*
- *Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- *S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- *Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai‘i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- *Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- *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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai‘i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Leah Morse*



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 1:58:20 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Minister, Hector Hoyos (aka) SisterFace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have always advocated and always will support for legalization, especially as a medical patient that already has been received for years now it is long past time for our state to make this progress happen through all the kinks and the things that will just amend in the future for the better It's important in a civil liberties and civil rights way also to get this done to a sponge and help along with that process and to make opportunity for the local community and many artisans from creative artisans to people that make medicines and natural foods and healing products and honestly, with all the bad sign against alcohol, the bad science against prescriptions, regardless of us needing them and the bad sign Cigarettes marijuana legalization is imperative and has been so important for me as a disabled person to be able to function and live with the pain I live in, but without being on hard-core prescription drugs, this is a huge improvement in many people's lives. I dare say that if there are such things in our state or businesses or apartment buildings, especially to protect people wherever there is a area For nicotine, there should be allowed to be the enjoyment of smoking legalized marijuana. This should just somehow be written in a fault to you it could help to think about that. I am in full support of this in matter of fact, my partner of over 25 years and an advocate for legalization is also we are two people under one household. I hope y'all get this through finally and send it to the Governor I know there are more steps, but I just think this is time and creating opportunity for the people on our islands is so important right now and will be in the future, Mahalos for your time

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:10:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Liza Kobayashi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a mom, former public school teacher, and a local - born and raised in Hawai'i, I am opposed to SB1613.

Just like putting a frog into a pot of cold water and then slowly turning up the heat until it boils and the frog dies because the change was so subtle that the frog didn't discern that its life was in peril until it was too late, this bill is like turning on the heat source that starts to cause the water to become warm.

There are some aspects in this bill that makes it appear harmless if passed, claiming there are parameters that will be put into place to help regulate adult use of this substance. But in truth, this bill is simply turning up the heat and beginning the open door and process for the frog to end up being cooked and killed by what it thinks is harmless.

This bill isn't made with the best future in mind for the keiki and future generations of Hawaii. Please take seriously the implications and horrible impact this would cause in Hawai'i for the sake of making money and profit. Is this really for the good of Hawai'i's keiki? Is this the future that we want for the younger generations in Hawai'i?

Please vote no.

Thank you for your time.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 11:04:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Glory Yoshida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in regards to SB1613 which aims to legalize marijuana in Hawaii. Just recently, a similar bill was killed in the house, and I am pleading with our senators do the same thing.

Legalizing marijuana will not only lead to addiction but also experimentation with more potent drugs. Is this what we want to happen to our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers? Addiction to drugs can lead to theft and violence, homelessness and other societal ills.

In addition, with DUIs, speeding and distracted driving already causing death and destruction on our roads, do we want add another element to impaired driving? Would you feel the need to legalize a drug if your family member or friend was killed or injure by a driver under the influence?

We are sending the wrong message to our youth and the rest of our community that legalizing a known mind and mood altering drug is okay.

Please defeat this bill and never propose another bill like it in the future. The lives of my family and friends as well as your family and friends depend on it as well as the community at large. PLEASE VOTE NO ON SB1613! Thank you.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:46:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alvin Castelo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members, My name is Alvin Castelo and I live in Kilauea, Kauai, HI. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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. Here are the facts: - Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i. - Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings. - S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes. - Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime. - Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults. - 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. By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis. Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill, Alvin Castelo

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:37:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nathan Lee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support. Legalization will help remove our black market.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:20:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katherine Castelo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members, My name is Katherine Castelo, and I live in Kilauea, Kauai. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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. Here are the facts: - Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i. - Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings. - S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes. - Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime. - Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults. - 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. By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 10:18:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kenny Wusstig	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill as not only a way to end criminalizing Marijuana, but for lawmakers to see the positive aspects of legalizing Marijuana. Time and time studies have shown Marijuana as a key factor in combating medical illnesses such as cataracts to glaucoma and certain nerve issues in the body. Henceforth being a cheaper and safer alternative over industrial made medications that side effects. I beg that this bill be passed so that the myths and stigmatization towards Marijuana would be put at rest.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:59:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
(Rev.) Cloudia Charters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha to our respected legislators, Greetings,

The time is ripe to finally legalize cannabis for adult use in our Islands. The black market. Will always be available to our underage population. Only adult will be affected by this bill. It will have positive effect on our tourism as well. Just ask Las Vegas. Automobiles, alcohol, medical procedures, and construction all have their share of unintended consequences and problems that arise. But we do not outlaw any of them. Let's control cannabis wisely and reduce any harms with compassion and intelligence. Aloha and mahalo



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/11/2025 9:20:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynette Honda	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I OPPOSE SB1613.**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 8:39:25 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Raelyn Reyno Yeomans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in STRONG SUPPORT of SB1613.

2/12/25

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to SB1613 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 review of the biomedical literature and by my clinical work as a psychiatrist in training here in Honolulu.

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 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 findings were recently replicated in Ontario, Canada, where a cohort study of over 13 million individuals found that new cases of schizophrenia nearly tripled during the period of liberalization of cannabis policy (Myran et al. 2025). A study of over 500,000 people from the same setting found that those with cannabis use disorder were at markedly increased risk of death relative to the general population, indicating a global mortality risk beyond the pro-psychosis effects of cannabis (Myran et al. 2025).

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 as well as their families, who are often affected nearly as much as the patients themselves – 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 our keiki.

Sincerely,

Zack Bonzell, MD

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 8:57:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jana Light	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

*Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,*

*My name is Jana Light, and I live in Kailua. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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. Here are the facts:*

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.*
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.*
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.*
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.*
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.*
- 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.*

*By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.*

*Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,*

*Jana Light*

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 8:59:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
carl nagasako	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am oppose to legalizing recreational marijuana. Aside from the obvious reasons provided such as negative impact on young folks, significant expansion of drug use, and greater cultivation of cannabis by individuals, I have seen the negative impact on individuals, often ruining their lives.

Some people can not handle marijuana, they can not stop using it excessively, resulting in two very damaging impacts: (1) massive cognitive impairment-even when not under the direct influence of the drug and (2) the lost of motivation to achieving anything meaningful like a solid education, a career, and interpersonal relationships.

Laws are put in place to protect our ohana, especially the most vulnerable. So why would we want to open the door to a drug that will hurt some of our folks?

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:04:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Britney	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Britney and I strongly oppose this bill. I truly believe legalizing and decriminalizing recreational marijuana will be dangerous for our communities, families, and children. Please do not pass this bill.



**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:14:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ronald Gouveia	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in opposition to recreational Cannabis. Please vote against as this will hurt our citizens.

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:23:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dave Willweber	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha.

IF you are for the destruction of Hawai'i's keiki and ohana via "checking out," inability to hold a job, increased crime, poverty, psychosis, harder drugs, then vote yes on this pakalolo bill and the people will know that you are NOT for the people, keiki, ohana, generations, the āina, culture, Aloha and a lot more.

If you are FOR all of the above, the obvious choice is to KILL THIS BILL and never bring it back up again. Ua mau ke ea o ka āina I ka pono. Mahalo nui, Dave Willweber

TO: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services  
Senate Judiciary Committee

POSITION: **OPPOSE** SB 1613 Relating to Cannabis

Dear Senators,

Marijuana or Cannabis is a Schedule Class I under the Controlled Substance Act defined as "drugs with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse."

<http://www.dea.gov/drug-information/drug-scheduling>

As residents, we are well aware of the disastrous effects of Methamphetamine to loved ones, friends, families, and to our communities. Adding legalizing recreational marijuana use provides a door for access that likely leads to tolerance and addiction by consistent users and greater potential for this abusive drug to get into the hands of our keiki, which is unacceptable.

The Cannabis plant (from dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds) and its chemical compounds when inhaled or ingested can cause mental health changes in mood, alter time perception, impairs a person's memory, and impairs a person's ability to think and react appropriately. Anxiety, fear, distrust, panic or hallucinations are common effects at a high level of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) in cannabis. Cannabis can also alter physical body movements and may cause short term and long term respiratory, cardiovascular effects. Legalizing recreational use does not subject nor mandate federal manufacturing drug standards to cannabis suppliers, which leads to variable levels of THC concentration among products, which is an obvious concern to loved ones, family, law enforcement, first responders who encounter users.

Cannabis is considered a 'gateway' drug. A drug substance along with alcohol and tobacco that a person will likely encounter in their life and are commonly used before trying other drug substances. Recreational use implies the users will use it sparingly for recreation but the real truth is there is no control over the users. Legalizing is an **OPEN** door for **access**.

What is of serious concern is the access to minors, both adolescents and young children (exposed to it from users). Aside from the immediate effects (some of which is listed above), the National Institute on Drug Abuse states the following, "Adolescence is an important period of brain development, and cannabis use may influence the brain in ways that could lead to long-term harmful effects. It is also associated with negative effects on educational attainment, employment, and income in young adulthood. Cannabis use at a young age has also been linked to other mental health conditions, including the likelihood of developing psychosis and to developing cannabis use disorder later in life."

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/cannabis-marijuana>

Another serious concern is the effect of cannabis on a person's ability to drive and increasing the risk of drivers under the influence of cannabis to be involved in motor vehicle accidents, including fatal ones. We don't need any additional drivers under the influence of more mind altering drugs.

I urge you to vote NO and oppose SB 1613.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Sharon Martin  
Windward resident  
Pharmacist



**JOSH FROST**

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Honolulu, HI 96816

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Thursday, February 13, 2025

Senate Committees on Health & Human Services and Judiciary

Senate Bill 1613 Relating to Cannabis  
**Testifying In Strong Support**

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard Members of the Committees:

I stand in strong support of SB1613. And I appreciate the support this issue has received in prior sessions by the Chairs of these committees and by the Senate as a whole. Mahalo!

Frankly, I'm baffled by the opposition to adult-use legalization of cannabis. I've heard all the concerns and I've heard all the objections.

"It'll harm our kids!" Or, "It's a gateway drug!" Or "it'll harm tourism." Or, and this might be my favorite; "it's basically already legal." My eyes roll.

Since cannabis has been legal in 23 states, data tells us that teen use of cannabis is actually declining. In the meantime, SAMHSA reported<sup>1</sup> in 2022 that 15% (20,000) of youth between the ages of 12 and 20 consumed alcohol. More than half of those who are drinking are also binge drinking.

People are concerned about edibles and children getting their hands on them. All the while, supermarkets are full of fun-flavored alcoholic beverages, "hard seltzers," and the like.

A story published just last week by Hawaii News Now<sup>2</sup> "showed that at least 40% of traffic fatalities in Hawaii involved drivers under the influence." But where's the outrage from lawmakers? Where's the calls for prohibition of alcohol?

I'm not aware of any policy conversation taking place at any level about banning alcohol use for adults in Hawaii. Is it because "it's already here, so we just have to accept it"? Or is it because our country has already tried it's hand at alcohol prohibition and see the result?

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/ReportToCongress/2022/state\\_reports/hawaii\\_profile.pdf](https://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/ReportToCongress/2022/state_reports/hawaii_profile.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Report: Hawaii alcohol-related traffic fatality rate outpaces national average: <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2025/02/04/report-hawaii-alcohol-related-traffic-fatality-rate-outpaces-national-average/>

According to the Hawaii Department of Health<sup>3</sup>, between 2018 and 2024, there were nearly 54,000 alcohol-related emergency department visits. During the same period, cannabis-related visits were approximately 10% the amount for alcohol. Again, where's the outrage? Where's the call for alcohol prohibition?

From the same DOH website, nicotine-related emergency department visits were just over 42,000.

Nationally, according to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics<sup>4</sup>, there are approximately 141,000 alcohol-related deaths in the U.S. every year. The number of cannabis-related deaths? ZERO.

On average, tobacco kills more than 490,000 people in the U.S. every year, according to the American Lung Association.<sup>5</sup> The Hawaii Department of health reports 1,400 tobacco-related deaths every year and contributes to 21,000 premature deaths in children and youth.<sup>6</sup> Where's the outrage? Where are the calls for tobacco prohibition?

The same American Lung Association also reports that Hawaii generates \$112 million in tobacco-related revenue every year.

I've seen testimony that insists we should fund educational programs about the potential harms and risks of cannabis use BEFORE we legalize it. But where will that funding come from? Every department in our state is underfunded and suffering from position vacancies. Wouldn't it make sense to fund those programs with revenue generated from fees and taxes from cannabis sales?

Cannabis is proven to be safer, less addictive, and has a long and growing list of potential health benefits (if used responsibly), but fear-mongering from law-enforcement and hypocritical prohibitionists prevent legal use by responsible adults.

Until opponents to cannabis legalization start calling for the prohibition of tobacco and alcohol, I find their concerns... hollow. I hope the responsible adult members of these committees will do the sensible, responsible thing and support the legalization, regulation, and taxation of cannabis. Please pass SB1613.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>3</sup> State of Hawaii Department of Health Behavioral Health Dashboard: <https://bh808.hawaii.gov/substance-use/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://drugabusestatistics.org/alcohol-abuse-statistics/#:~:text=Alcohol%20Abuse%20Statistics%20\[2023\]:,consumption%20during%20COVID-19%20lockdowns](https://drugabusestatistics.org/alcohol-abuse-statistics/#:~:text=Alcohol%20Abuse%20Statistics%20[2023]:,consumption%20during%20COVID-19%20lockdowns)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lung.org/research/sotc/facts#:~:text=Smoking%20is%20the%20number%20one,in%20the%20U.S.%20each%20year.>

<sup>6</sup> <https://health.hawaii.gov/tobacco/#:~:text=Kills%201,400%20adults%20and%20contributes,Medicaid%20costs%20related%20to%20smoking>

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 10:27:30 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Tamosiunas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the establishment of the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office and the legalization of personal adult cannabis use for several important reasons.

First, creating a dedicated office to regulate cannabis ensures proper oversight, consumer safety, and adherence to state laws. By consolidating resources under one department, Hawai‘i can streamline enforcement and regulation across both cannabis and hemp industries. This approach will help provide a clear framework for both businesses and consumers, encouraging responsible use and production practices.

Legalizing adult-use cannabis starting in 2026 will benefit Hawai‘i’s economy through the creation of jobs, particularly in agriculture, retail, and other cannabis-related sectors. It will also generate tax revenue that can be reinvested into the state’s infrastructure and public services. The inclusion of taxes on cannabis sales ensures that the industry is contributing to the broader community while still remaining accessible to consumers.

The decriminalization of certain marijuana offenses will help reduce the burden on the criminal justice system and promote social equity. It is important to move away from punitive measures that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, especially when marijuana-related offenses are no longer a significant threat to public safety. This shift will allow law enforcement to focus on more serious criminal activity.

Lastly, this bill promotes fairness by ensuring that the personnel and assets from the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture related to cannabis are transferred to the new office. This move consolidates expertise and resources to better regulate the growing cannabis market and maintain public health and safety standards.

In summary, I believe that the establishment of the Hawai‘i Cannabis and Hemp Office, alongside the legalization of adult cannabis use, represents a thoughtful, balanced approach to cannabis regulation, economic growth, social equity, and public safety. Mahalo.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 10:27:52 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
nicolas armero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Nick Armero, and I reside in Honolulu. I am writing to express my support for S.B. 1613, which seeks to legalize adult-use cannabis in Hawai‘i.

The continued prohibition of cannabis doesn’t make our communities safer; instead, it drains taxpayer resources, exacerbates racial inequalities in the criminal justice system, and unnecessarily fills our overcrowded jails and prisons.

Consider the following points:

- Currently, possessing over three grams of cannabis can lead to up to 30 days in jail, even though the majority of Hawai‘i residents support legalization.
- Communities of color bear the brunt of discriminatory enforcement, leading to disproportionate incarceration and long-term consequences like reduced access to jobs, housing, education, and public assistance.
- S.B. 1613 provides a pathway for expunging records of cannabis-related arrests or convictions, offering relief to those still grappling with the fallout of criminalization.
- Legalizing cannabis would diminish the illegal market, allowing law enforcement to redirect resources toward more pressing criminal activity.
- Evidence from other states shows that teen marijuana use has actually declined post-legalization, under regulated systems.
- Taxing and regulating cannabis in Hawai‘i could generate significant revenue for vital public services—such as youth programs, mental health care, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

By passing S.B. 1613, Hawai‘i can end the unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin to repair the damage caused by the war on drugs. I respectfully urge you to support this bill to legalize adult-use cannabis in our state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Nick Armero





## **Testimony in Support of SB1613: Safe Adult Use Cannabis Legislation and Legalization in Hawai'i**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB1613, which seeks to legalize and regulate the safe adult use of cannabis in Hawaii. As a DARE Graduate, father of two young children, a concerned citizen born and raised in the islands, and an advocate for evidence-based policy, I urge you to pass this bill to promote community safety, economic development, and reparative justice for Native Hawaiians and other communities disproportionately impacted by the war on cannabis and the cost-of-living crisis in Hawai'i.

### **Cannabis as Medicine:**

- Cannabis has recognized medicinal properties.
- The U.S. government holds a patent (US6630507B1, filed in 2003) titled "Cannabinoids as Antioxidants and Neuroprotectants."
- The endocannabinoid system (ECS), present in all vertebrates, plays a crucial role in the nervous system and regulates various physiological processes, including appetite, digestion, mood, and coordination.
- Dr. Cristina Sanchez has studied the anti-tumoral properties of medical cannabis, noting the apoptotic effect of cannabinoids on cancer cells containing cannabinoid receptors while leaving healthy cells unaffected.
- Historical records, such as a pamphlet published in Cairo in 1123 CE, mention "hashish," indicating long-standing awareness of cannabis use.
- Opponents of legalization often restrict access to potential medicine, perpetuating stigmas and trauma for those who choose plant-based therapies.
- Pakalolo appeared in the Hawaiian Language Newspaper Ka Nonanona for medicine in 1842 per Civil Beat article.

### **The End of Reefer Madness:**

- Medical cannabis is legal in 39 of 50 states, four U.S. territories, and Washington D.C., with 24 states offering adult-use cannabis programs.
- Countries like Germany, Thailand, Canada, the Netherlands, and Jamaica have also legalized cannabis in various forms.
- The Rohrabacher–Farr amendment (2014) prohibits federal prosecution of individuals complying with state medical cannabis laws.
- Arguments against legalization often lack scientific backing, reflecting outdated propaganda.

### **Accountability, Not Blame:**

- Arguments against cannabis often blame the plant for criminal behavior.
- Treatment programs for substance abuse and domestic violence emphasize accountability and personal responsibility.
- Cannabis does not force anyone to use other substances or engage in criminal activity.
- Individuals are responsible for their own choices.
- Responses to cannabis vary due to individual metabolism, ECS, and personal experiences.
- Standardized dosages and generic classifications like "indica," "sativa," and "hybrid" fail to account for individual differences.

### Community Safety:

- Legalizing and regulating adult-use cannabis will enhance public safety by:
  - **Reducing Illegal Activity:** A regulated market will displace the illicit cannabis trade, reducing associated crime and violence.
  - **Ensuring Product Safety:** Legalization allows for quality control, ensuring cannabis products are free from contaminants.
  - **Promoting Responsible Use:** Regulation enables age restrictions, public education, and harm reduction strategies.

### Addressing Public Safety Concerns:

- The Honolulu Police Department has expressed concerns about public safety, impairment, and youth access.
- Data from states with legal adult-use cannabis demonstrates that these concerns have not materialized:
  - **Impaired Driving:** A 2021 JAMA study found no significant increase in traffic fatalities in states that legalized cannabis.
  - **Youth Access:** The 2022 NSDUH shows that youth cannabis use has not increased in states with legal adult-use markets.
  - **Crime:** A 2018 study in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* found that legalization is associated with a reduction in violent crime.

### Workplace Safety:

- **Limited Evidence of Workplace Issues:** A 2022 review in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found cannabis use was not significantly associated with increased workplace accidents or absenteeism.
- **Stable Workplace Safety in Legalized States:** A 2021 NBER study found no evidence of increased workplace injuries after legalization.
- **Cannabis Use Patterns:** Many adults use cannabis responsibly during non-work hours.
- **Alcohol vs. Cannabis:** Alcohol is far more likely to contribute to workplace issues.
- **Data from Other States:** States like Washington and Oregon have not reported widespread workplace issues related to cannabis legalization.

### **Addressing Specific Concerns:**

- **Normalization:** Data from states like Colorado and Washington shows that youth cannabis use has not increased after legalization.
- **Parental/Community Readiness:** Legalization allows for funding and implementation of education campaigns.
- **Reassurance:** Legalized states have demonstrated that regulated markets can coexist with prevention and treatment systems.
- **Youth Health:** Legalization does not increase youth access. Regulated markets enforce age restrictions.
- **Brain Development:** Legalization allows for targeted prevention efforts.
- **Mental Health:** Legalization allows for better research and public education.
- **Addiction Risk:** The addiction potential of cannabis is lower than that of alcohol, tobacco, or opioids.
- **Increased Accessibility:** Legalization reduces youth access by displacing the illicit market.
- **Prevention:** Prevention efforts are crucial and can be funded through cannabis tax revenue.
- **Performance:** Data from legalized states does not show significant declines in academic or workplace performance.

### **Looking to Other States:**

- Other states are demonstrating that responsible cannabis use can be integrated into various professions. For example, Utah allows off-duty firefighters to use cannabis (SB46). Similarly, New Jersey allows off-duty police officers to use cannabis (CREAMM Act). These examples highlight a shift towards recognizing that responsible adult use does not necessarily equate to professional impairment. Hawai'i needs similar protections for workers and first responders.
- With close to 9 million visitors that come from a state or place that has adult-use cannabis options, Hawai'i needs to provide access while simultaneously improving medical options, quality, and value. The taxes need to be reinvested back into the community that address cost of living, preserving land, and social equity programs.

### **Economic Development:**

- Legalizing cannabis can create jobs, generate tax revenue, and provide small business opportunities.
- We can subsidize local farmers and create a closed-loop system to provide free kids lunches.
- Infrastructure and protections can be pursued from generated revenue.
- We can provide jobs and keep locals in Hawaii.

### **Social Equity:**

- **Reparative Justice:** The war on cannabis has disproportionately harmed Native Hawaiians and other marginalized communities.
- SB1613 should include provisions for expungement, equity in licensing, and reparative funding.
- **Residency Requirements:** Residency requirements for licensing would only apply before federal legalization.

**Science-Based Evidence:**

- The scientific community supports cannabis regulation over prohibition.
- Studies show that legalization does not lead to increased youth use or public health crises.
- It can also reduce racial disparities in arrests and contribute to economic growth.

**Conclusion:**

SB1613 offers Hawai'i an opportunity to enact compassionate, equitable, and evidence-based policy. Legalizing and regulating cannabis can enhance community safety, stimulate economic development, and address the harms of prohibition. I urge you to pass this bill with strong provisions for reparative justice and equity to only allow those born in Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians as a way to ensure caretaking of the land and the people are honest and authentic.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kai Luke

**LATE**

To: Committee on Health and Human Services and Committee on Judiciary

Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am

Re: Testimony to Strongly Oppose SB1613

From: Heather Nakao, Individual

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Chair Rhoads, and members of the committees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB1613, which seeks to legalize cannabis use in Hawai'i. While I recognize that cannabis has medicinal benefits for those who truly need it, that is precisely why Hawai'i has a medical cannabis program in place. Expanding access to cannabis for recreational use will have serious consequences for public health and safety, particularly for individuals like myself who have severe allergic reactions to cannabis smoke.

I suffer from a cannabis allergy that triggers seizures when I am exposed to secondhand smoke. In states where recreational cannabis has been legalized, public spaces have become saturated with marijuana smoke, making it nearly impossible for people like me to move around safely. I have seen firsthand how other states, despite their so-called regulations, have failed to control cannabis use in public areas, forcing individuals with allergies, respiratory conditions, or other sensitivities to either suffer the health consequences or remain indoors.

I am not alone in this struggle. There are countless others who experience adverse effects from cannabis exposure, including asthma attacks, migraines, and other serious health complications. Legalizing cannabis for recreational use will prioritize the convenience of a few over the well-being of many—including those of us who have no choice but to avoid exposure due to medical necessity. Even with regulations in place, enforcement is weak, and secondhand smoke exposure will become a daily public health hazard for non-users.

Hawai'i has always prided itself on its commitment to public health and community well-being. By legalizing recreational cannabis, the state would be sending the wrong message and putting vulnerable populations at risk. Those who genuinely need cannabis for medical reasons already have access to our medical cannabis card system. There is no legitimate public health benefit to expanding access beyond this system—only risks that we will all be forced to bear.

I urge you to vote NO on SB1613 and stand up for the rights of those of us who cannot safely be around cannabis. Public health, safety, and the well-being of all Hawai'i residents should take precedence over the commercial interests of the cannabis industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will protect public spaces and the health of all residents by rejecting this harmful bill.

Sincerely,  
Heather Nakao

**LATE**

February 12, 2024

Testimony for S.B. 1613

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:36:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kaipo Hanakahi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Majority of locals strongly support this bill.



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:46:43 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
veronica alaniz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members, My name is Veronica Alaniz, and I live in Oahu. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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.

Here are the facts: - Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i. - Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings. - S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes. - Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime. - Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults. - 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. By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis. Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill, Veronica Alaniz

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:52:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Sulpico	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Mark Sulpico, I'm 24 years old. As a young adult I strongly, strongly oppose this bill because I believe legalizing and decriminalizing recreational marijuana will be detrimental and dangerous for our communities and families. Please don't pass this bill. Mahalo for your time and patience.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 12:11:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patty Takahashi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**OPPOSE!!!**

Stop wasting our tax payer money by submitting these bills. We the people do not want any personal individual using for recreational purposes!

you and those people need to move to another state where it is ignorantly legal

**LATE**

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members

My name is Riane Ashley Cardenas and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying **in support of S.B. 1613** 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has [widespread support](#) in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Legalizing adult-use cannabis has a potential to increase our State coffers as it did in recreational states. This will allow Hawaii to pay its Teachers, Social workers, advocates, state nurses and more. We can also, fund social programs better at a State level. This will also allow Hawaii to be a bit more independent as a State, allowing our island State to provide more for its people. You can access the economic reports via Whitney Economics and see how cannabis can positively benefit our state as a whole.

Please **support S.B. 1613** to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Riane Ashley Cardenas

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 1:19:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
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-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 1:40:55 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Martha Morishige	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Although the bill includes measures aimed at preventing marijuana from reaching our keiki (children), experts agree that increased youth access is a common “side effect” of legalization. According to the [Congressional Research Service](#) (May 2, 2024),

I do not support recreational marijuana. We should do all we can to protect adults and children from the harmful side effects of this psychoactive drug.

"[m]arijuana 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."

The bill, as written, claims to provide penalties for selling marijuana to a minor but lists that penalty only as a misdemeanor.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 1:42:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dawn O'Brien	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee,

TYSM for your time in considering the public's voice on this matter!

I am strongly opposed to this as it is 1) against the Federal Law to have cannabis on person, 2) cannabis utilizes six times the amount of water that average/typical plants use therefore depleting already precious resources of water on our islands (lets remember the Lahaina wildfires & tragedy), 3) cannabis when legalized causes "buyers remorse" in states where it's passed due to increase in crime, personal assault, addiction and socio-economic impact, 4) Japanese tourists are rather conservative in public and will not enjoy our pungent pot smoking culture, 5) neuroscientific studies have proven time & again that cannabis use decreases brain function, 6) our Hawai'i school children are already testing well below national standards or average levels and using pot will further hinder our statistics, 7) this represents a small special interest subset of Hawai'i's larger population -- those who will profit from it and those addicted, 8) typically those who buy cannabis tend to buy the "cheaper" stuff which will be the illegal variety laced with pesticide & chemicals that are extremely detrimental to health, 9) all of this (& more) will cost us the tax-payers of Hawai'i more than we will gain.

In summary, I strongly oppose this bill and ask that you the representative committee members would do the same and vote against it. TYSVM!

Gratefully With Aloha,

Dawn O'Brien

President, H.O.P.E. Hawai'i, Inc.

Aloha Ambassador, \*CHOOSE ALOHA\* Program

#AlohaAlwaysWINS!





**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 2:22:55 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Abby Simmons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and esteemed Members of the Committee,

I stand in strong support. Please pass this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Abby Simmons

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 2:25:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jared Yamaguchi	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Senators of Hawaii,**

My name is Jared Yamaguchi, and I lead a church in Mililani called Hope Chapel Mililani. As a Keiki O Ka' Āina, I have lived in the Mililani community my entire life. First, I want to thank you for your faithful service to the people of Hawaii through your agency of influence and your mindfulness in making decisions that affect the thousands of ohanas and keiki in our state whom you represent.

My wife and I have four keiki (ages 14, 11, 9, and 7) who participate in local sports at the outdoor roller hockey rink in Mililani and attend Kipapa Elementary, Mililani Middle, and Mililani High School. Like most local fathers, my dream is for them to grow up as people of purpose and character, embodying the value of ALOHA that makes our state so special. I share this background because, as both a community leader and a father, I cannot envision how the legalization of marijuana would benefit our family units, create a better future for our keiki, or enhance the spirit of ALOHA that defines Hawaii.

I understand that some view this bill as a solution to a problem, arguing that taxing this already sought-after substance would generate revenue for the state and potentially lower other taxes. However, I must ask: at what cost are we willing to solve a funding issue if we risk losing the ALOHA in our ohana that we are known for?

Based on my research of other states and personal experience, I believe this change will only open Pandora's box, creating more problems for Hawaii's keiki, teens, and young adults. As you know, this decision will profoundly impact Hawaii's future. For these reasons, I strongly oppose SB1613. While I speak as a community leader, please receive this testimony from the heart of a father concerned for the future of his children and their children's children.

Mahalo for your time!

Blessings & Aloha,

Jared Yamaguchi

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 2:31:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeffrey F Mizuno	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Text

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 2:56:34 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicholas Bolan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and

Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Nicholas Bolan, and I live in Mililani, I'm testifying in support of S.B.

1613 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Our great state.

- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.

- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.

- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.-

- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.

- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and

communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613

to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill.

i urge you all to pass it for the revenue this can bring with taxation.

NICHOLAS BOLAN

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 4:20:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lorraine Weire	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support this bill. Not only do I feel that the legal choice of cannabis would be greatly more beneficial than alcohol of any kind ever could be.

I believe it should be the right for each individual to choose and I feel strongly that it can be extremely beneficial to the mental and physical health to many.

Based on my personal encounters, I have Never experienced the rage or physical abuse. Nor have I witnessed any violent crimes of any person who has consumed cannabis. However, there are too many times to count how I have witness alcohol consumption do everything listed plus many many more.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Weire

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 5:31:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Yvonne Alvarado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Yvonne Alvarado Support Bill SB1613

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 7:17:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judy Ilar	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I don't understand why marijuana keeps showing up. Enough of this nonsense! Marijuana is a mind altering drug. Don't create a drug problem that leads to mental illness and therefore, it will cost taxpayers money to rehabilitate. How about the crime that will be bred by a mind altering drug like marijuana. No to recreational marijuana. How is this good for the public's healthy and safety. Quite the contrary.

I live with my elderly parents. Sometimes there are people smoking in our neighborhood and we can smell it. It bother my parents and myself.

There is nothing good that will result from allowing recreational marijuana. If the State wants to make money, I suggest to audit our State and cutback on government programs that are irrelevant and redundant. Slash the State WorkForce. Eliminate wasteful spending. This is what our legislatures should be focusing on, not discussing marijuana.



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 6:47:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Peggy Regentine	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It would be silly to state that people are not using cannabis. I oppose stating it is legal though. I have seen several family members USE marijuana and I saw a laziness, less desire to achieve, careless attitude. I vote against passing this bill.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 5:36:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicholas Manago	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Nick Manago and I strongly oppose this bill as I believe legalizing and decriminalizing recreational marijuana will be dangerous for our communities and families. Please don't pass this bill.

Mahalo.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:21:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doug Klunder	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Doug Klunder, and I'm testifying in support of SB1613, a bill to legalize and regulate adult use of cannabis. Although I have been a resident of Hawai'i (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 Hawai'i 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!

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 9:22:53 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
James koizumi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass SB1613 out of committee to legalize,regulate,and educate and make our communities safer for all.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 10:17:07 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Ward	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators San Buenaventura, Aquino, Rhoads, Gabbard and members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

Testimony of Deborah Ward, Honolulu resident:

I am standing in opposition to SB1613, 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? Would they definitively be able to determine cannabis use in those instances?

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 SB1613, which states:

“§A-5 5 Limitations; construction with other laws. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to: (5) Require any person that occupies, owns, or controls real property to allow the consumption, cultivation, dispensing, display, distribution, or processing 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 intended for inhalation, unless:

(A) The tenant is renting a room or rooms in only a portion of a residence, where the rest of the residence is rented to other people or occupied by the landlord;

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 a recent 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 ka aina i ka pono. The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness.”

Mahalo for your sincere consideration,  
Deborah Ward  
901 River St.  
Honolulu, HI 96817

Some references:

“Cannabis industry faces debt reckoning”

By Steven Church and Reshmi Basu

Bloomberg News (published Feb. 12, 2025 in Honolulu Star-Advertiser p. A-9) Excerpt follows:

“...a wave of debt that the industry borrowed in recent years to expand in states where weed is legal comes due. The biggest companies, those that operate in more than one state, have as much as \$6 billion in debt maturing in 2026, according to Beau Whitney, chief economist at Whitney Economics, which specializes in the cannabis market.’

“The reckoning comes as the industry has failed to turn legal weed into reliable profits. In 2022 more than 42% of dealers reported making a profit, according to a survey by Whitney. By 2024 the number had dropped to about 27%. Some who can’t consolidate will fail and go out of business. Many will be forced to refinance their debt at higher interest rates and onerous contractual covenants.”

“Study links cannabis dependence with higher death risk.”

[https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2829914?utm\\_source=For\\_The\\_Media&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=ftm\\_links&utm\\_term=020625&mc\\_cid=3f78e8cb6c&mc\\_eid=UNIQID](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2829914?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_term=020625&mc_cid=3f78e8cb6c&mc_eid=UNIQID)

“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-](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&ampshare=https%3A%2F%2Ffortune.com%2Fwell%2F2023%2F06%2F03%2Fmairjuana-users-leaner-less-likely-develop-diabetes-metabolic-cognitive-issues-attention%2F)

[attention/#amp\\_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=16859314895933&csi=1&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&ampshare=https%3A%2F%2Ffortune.com%2Fwell%2F2023%2F06%2F03%2Fmairjuana-users-leaner-less-likely-develop-diabetes-metabolic-cognitive-issues-attention%2F](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&ampshare=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>

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 10:28:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marion Logan	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Members of the Committee,

Aloha and thank you for serving Hawaii and governing with our people at the forefront of your mind and hearts as you serve.

I stand in opposition to SB 1613 relating to legal cannabis use in our Hawaii.

This issue is personal because I grew up with a father who was a regular cannabis user. One of the often-overlooked effects of marijuana is the high and the negative impacts on the family. As a child, I experienced an absent-minded father who was not present with my mom, me, and my younger brother. He was high throughout the day usually smoking in the morning, at lunch, and in the evening. He was ‘functional’ because he held a job—but the effects of his addiction caused dysfunction in our family. Most of my childhood memories involved him being high. I grew up with my father who did not know how to engage with his children, could not cope with daily rigors of life, and caused financial hardship on our family. **THIS HAPPENED WITH A MARIJUANA THAT CONTAINED 5-10% THC.**

The marijuana today ranges in the 20-40% and 90% + concentrates. The biggest concern is the younger marijuana users who, by a higher percentage, are using concentrates more than marijuana cigarettes. Addiction studies show that the earlier one is exposed to a substance use—the more likely they are to become addicts.

To legalize marijuana, is to expose larger amounts of youth to THC at higher concentrates. The problem with legalization in its current form is that there are **NO REGULATIONS** on concentrate amounts. All legalized recreational substances have regulated amounts of the active ingredient. Please consider the dangerous effects of unregulated, untethered, mass produced, and mass consumed THC in our state.

If it were to be legalized, why not regulate consumption per item below 10%? Why not outlaw concentrate THC altogether? Why not prevent mass marketing to our youth and prevent mass media campaigns that will resemble the cigarette ads of yesteryear? **YOUR DECISION WILL IMPACT GENERATIONS—PLEASE KILL THIS BILL!**



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/12/2025 11:18:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jared Parrish	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and members of the committee,**

**My name is Jared Parrish. I hold a bachelor's degree in social work and am currently working on obtaining my master's degree at UH Manoa. I am submitting Testimony in support of SB1613.**

**I urge you to pass this bill, which covers the legalization of cannabis for adult use, regulation of the industry, and decriminalization of certain cannabis-related crimes. This bill is an important step in the right direction toward a new-age cannabis policy in the state of Hawai'i.**

**SB1613 would help build an office for Cannabis and Hemp to manage all parts of the cannabis industry in Hawai'i. Taxing the legal use of cannabis will bring much-needed extra funds and create further business opportunities and essential jobs related to the industry—regulation by the state to ensure safety, quality control, and responsible sales.**

**This bill hopes to right the wrongs made in the past by decriminalizing specific cannabis-related issues. Marginalized minority groups and communities are victims of laws currently in place, making cannabis illegal and prohibited in multiple ways. By changing our stance on personal use, SB1613 stands for fairness and allows law enforcement to focus on more serious issues.**

**Safety and education are a vital part of the legalization effort as well. Hawai'i should lead by the examples of other states that have successfully legalized and regulated cannabis. SB1613 will boost the economy, reduce unnecessary criminalization, and create a responsible system for cannabis use. So again, I urge you to support and pass this bill.**

**Mahalo**

**Jared Parrish**

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 12:01:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexis	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Alexis, and I live in Waianae . I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawaii.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means that people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization-reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related
- By legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis, Hawaii can raise millions of dollars for true public safety programs-youth education, mental health care services, crisis intervention, and supportive housing.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawaii will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Alexis

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 12:56:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jan Correa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Rhoads & Buenaventura & members of this committee

As a registered pharmacist in the state of Hawaii, I oppose any legalization of recreational marijuana. For one thing, the state has not been able to regulate the medicinal marijuana market, and the homeless population problem has not been addressed by both city and state. Visit WA, OR, CO, NV places that have legalized recreational marijuana, do we want our small state to turn into those states where small businesses have been shut down due to drug addicts smoking and doing street drugs with no policing? Our small businesses have already suffered due to Covid. We need to protect our precious aquifer and Hawaiian homelands (growers will be using pesticides to protect their plants and we will see erosion, pesticides seeping into the oceans, destroying ecosystems and reefs) Cartels will make their way into our small state to control growers/buyers/users. We already have one of the highest rates of meth mftr/use, which none of the agencies have been able to control. Take care of the homeless situation, clean up the island before you bring in another problem. The revenue is minute, ask each resident to pay \$40/year to the education fund instead. You're better off to do a lottery where the money/revenue goes strictly for education. No one benefits with this legalization except the drug addicts. You legislators are against fireworks because it creates health hazards, people who have asthma or breathing problems are affected by the fireworks smoke..I've heard from many people that they hate the smell of marijuana, it will be everywhere you go, so legalizing recreational marijuana will affect that same population, but because you think it will bring in money for the state you're ok with that? According to the NIH (The Adv Psychopharmacol article: Cannabis, A Complex Plant, there are over 400 chemical entities in Cannabis, it's (recreational marijuana) use is associated with various mental health problems, particularly in the young. It is mind boggling how an ER doctor (Green) is willing to approve legalization knowing the ill affects to the user and the 2nd hand smoke victim. Federal govt has zero tolerance against any type of drug use, regardless if medicinal marijuana is legal, being in an environment where the smoke is everywhere, where you're forced to breathe in the toxic fumes due to legal recreational use, may cause you to have a positive urine test for THC, how is that okay? Go to the states that have legalized marijuana, see for yourself. We do NOT want our small islands to be ruined. This bill detracts from keeping residents of Hawaii healthy and safe, and while we need to protect our aquifer (after the Red Hill SNAFU and the Maui Fire in Lahaina) we also need to protect the aina. You also know that we have not been able to fill law enforcement positions, the city is asking HPD officers to not retire and to stay on due to shortage in workforce, why tax them even more with having to deal with more problems that this would cause if legalized? It's common

sense. The majority of the people in the state do NOT want more homeless, more violence, unhealthy air to breathe, listen to the people who voted you in, we pay your bills.

Thank you for your time, our vote is a 'NO' do NOT ruin our health and land,do NOT legalize recreational marijuana.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 1:29:10 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leonard Nakoa III	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of SB1613

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 5:22:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dalene McCormick	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 5:32:34 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kim Cordery	Testifying for Aloha Freedom Coalition	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

I appose SB1613! This Bill opens up the door for endangering society as well as a gateway drug to other drugs.

My husband was one to whom this happened to. Thank fully he found God and delivered him from all drugs! This has only created more problems in states like Colorado that have passed this law.

Drug use has lead led to more crime and violence. A'ole! NO THANK YOU!



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 6:01:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anthony Aliengena	Testifying for UnitedStatesofGanja	Support	In Person

Comments:

Is everyone aware that continuing with the status quo simply ensures children will continue having easy access to cannabis? It seems to me that the main question with this bill is to continue the Prohibition System or not. It's a question of whether we going to do more of the same or are we going to try a different approach to get different results?

Legalizing the cannabis market is the only hope for ending the black market. A vote against this bill is a vote to continue the failed Prohibition system and the black market that thrives under it.

As long as the black market exists, children will have access, since regulation of an underground market is impossible.

We have to stop criminalizing cannabis and end the war against it.

Vote for this bill, and let the war against cannabis end in Hawaii. Hawaii lawmakers can then show what's possible when a government helps its people lead this new industry forward into the future, becoming an example for the world to follow.

To ensure the black market ends, taxation and regulation must be sensible, allowing existing entrepreneurs to continue thriving and new ones to easily enter the market. Higher taxes and burdensome regulation compliance make it harder for people to enter the legitimate market and encourages them to operate in the black market.

This bill is basically about continuing to criminalize Cannabis or not. I hope everyone understands that criminalizing something doesn't affect its availability; it simply reclassifies the providers as criminals. Consider this example I heard from someone who was in prison, when

the prison changed its policy on cigarettes making them illegal. There was never a day that they didn't have cigarettes; they simply went from being allowed to now being a crime.

It should also be noted that drugs still manage to find their way into maximum security prisons, which proves that criminalizing something doesn't affect its availability. Therefore what chance does continuing to criminalize cannabis have in the free and open society? There is no black market of children selling alcohol to each other, so let's legitimize the cannabis market to get the same results.

**LATE**

## Testimony in Support of SB 1613

Aloha Chairs Takayama and Matayoshi, Vice Chairs Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Chun, and Committee Members,

My name is Cristina Holt, and I am a resident of Hilo, HI. I am testifying in strong support of S.B. 1613, relating to cannabis.

The legalization and regulation of adult-use cannabis in Hawai'i is a necessary step forward in ensuring social equity, economic growth, and public safety. SB 1613 provides a comprehensive framework for legalizing, regulating, and taxing cannabis for adult use while maintaining essential safeguards for medical patients and public health.

This bill is critical for the following reasons:

- **Promotes Social Equity:** SB 1613 includes a social equity grant program to support communities disproportionately impacted by past cannabis criminalization, helping to create economic opportunities and ensure equitable participation in the legal market.
- **Strengthens Public Safety:** A well-regulated cannabis industry reduces illicit market activity, ensuring that cannabis products are tested, labeled, and safely distributed.
- **Boosts Economic Development:** Legal cannabis sales will generate substantial tax revenue that can be reinvested in essential state services, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- **Supports Small Businesses and Farmers:** This bill establishes pathways for local farmers and small businesses to enter the cannabis market, fostering economic diversity and sustainability.
- **Provides Consumer Protections:** By implementing clear regulations, SB 1613 ensures that consumers have access to safe, lab-tested cannabis products rather than unregulated and potentially harmful alternatives.
- **Maintains Medical Cannabis Protections:** The bill safeguards the rights of medical cannabis patients by maintaining access to high-quality, affordable treatment options.

Hawai'i has the opportunity to join numerous other states that have successfully implemented legal, regulated cannabis markets. By passing SB 1613, we can shift resources away from unnecessary criminalization, invest in local communities, and create a safer, more just cannabis industry.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support S.B. 1613.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Cristina Holt

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 6:13:16 AM  
Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

**Testimony in Opposition to SB1613 – The Legalization of Recreational Marijuana**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ellie Kapihe, and I’m writing to strongly oppose SB1613, which would legalize recreational marijuana in Hawai‘i. I’m deeply concerned about what this would mean for our keiki, our communities, and the future of our state. While some might see this as just another policy decision, the truth is, it’s a decision that will shape the health and safety of generations to come.

Science is crystal clear—marijuana affects the developing brain. Regular use in teens and young adults has been linked to memory loss, poor academic performance, and even long-term mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and psychosis. The last thing we need is easier access to a drug that can derail their future.

And then there’s the impact on our neighborhoods. We’ve seen it happen in other states—more public intoxication, impaired drivers on the road, and an increase in crime. No community benefits from more drug use. We’ve worked too hard to build safe, thriving spaces for our families to introduce a substance that will only make things harder for law enforcement and local businesses.

We also can’t ignore the fact that marijuana is a gateway drug. Many people struggling with addiction will tell you the same thing—it started with weed, but it didn’t stop there. Making it more accessible and normalizing its use only increases the chances that people, especially young ones, will move on to stronger and more dangerous substances.

Leadership isn’t just about passing laws—it’s about making decisions that protect and strengthen our people. SB1613 doesn’t do that. Instead, it opens the door to more harm, more risk, and more broken families. I urge you to vote against this bill and stand up for the health and safety of our keiki and communities.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Ellie Kapihe



**LATE**

## **Community Statement on Senate Bill and Cannabis Industry Expansion**

This Senate Bill seeks to support the expansion of the cannabis industry in Hawaii, specifically addressing dispensary operations and sustainable agriculture. The bill includes provisions for allowing additional growth facilities and introducing broader retail opportunities across the state. The aim is to foster local farmers and stimulate economic growth in the state through responsible cannabis production and sales. It is crucial to note that the bill also emphasizes sustainability goals, job creation, and the development of ancillary industries.

### **Key Points of the Bill:**

- Retail Dispensary Expansion:** The bill proposes that each dispensary license holder be allowed to operate additional locations, enabling broader access to products and services.
- Sustainability Goals:** The bill places an emphasis on locally grown cannabis, which aligns with Hawaii’s sustainability objectives and the push toward locally sourced agricultural products.
- Revenue Generation:** By expanding the industry, the state is poised to see significant revenue from both cannabis sales and the ancillary businesses that emerge. These businesses will provide infrastructure, manufacturing, and support services that contribute to the economy.
- Support for Local Farmers:** One of the primary goals is to ensure that local farmers benefit from the cannabis industry, which will

contribute to Hawaii's agricultural sector and sustainable farming practices.

## **The Importance of Supporting Local Farmers**

Studies and reports indicate that integrating local agriculture into the cannabis industry can significantly benefit the state. Sustainability goals are tied closely to the local farming initiative, as it reduces environmental impact, ensures fresh products, and supports Hawaii's rural communities.

- Increased Revenue for Hawaii:** Data from various state reports highlight that local agriculture and cannabis production can diversify the economy, creating new revenue streams and jobs. The [Hawaii Cannabis Industry Revenue Data](#) shows that the cannabis industry could generate millions in tax revenue for the state, while also providing numerous employment opportunities in farming, processing, and retail operations.

- Support for the State's Sustainability Efforts:** As outlined in the [Hawaii State Sustainability Plan](#), fostering local agriculture aligns with broader environmental goals, including reducing the carbon footprint associated with importing goods.

## **Industry Impacts and Economic Growth**

The expansion of cannabis dispensaries and the inclusion of local farmers are not only beneficial to agriculture but will stimulate a host of sub-industries, including distribution, manufacturing, retail, and other ancillary services. This will create an ecosystem that drives growth and innovation across Hawaii's economy.

- Ancillary Businesses:** The cannabis industry will create opportunities for businesses that support manufacturing, distribution, packaging, and marketing. These will support the main cannabis market, driving further economic activity in both urban and rural areas.

•**Job Creation:** A growing cannabis industry will lead to job creation in a variety of sectors, including farming, retail, research, and technology, providing sustainable livelihoods for Hawaii's residents.

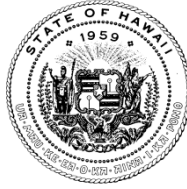
**Key Data Sources:**

1. [Hawaii Cannabis Industry Revenue Data](#): Hawaii State Tax Reports

2. [Sustainability Goals and Farming Initiatives](#): Hawaii State Sustainability Plan

3. [Civil Beat Article on Cannabis Dispensary Expansion](#): Civil Beat Hawaii





**LATE**

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

Thursday, February 13, 2025  
9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Room 415, and Via Videoconference

**S.B. 1613**  
**RELATING TO CANNABIS**

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

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The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) **OFFERS COMMENTS on S.B. 1613**, which establishes the Hawaii Cannabis and Hemp Office within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to regulate all aspects of the cannabis plant; legalizes the personal adult use of cannabis beginning January 1, 2026; 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; decriminalizes certain drug offenses related to marijuana and marijuana concentrate; etc.

HDOT appreciates the Legislature's efforts to safeguard public safety and public health, particularly the following provisions in the bill:

- Establishment of public safety grant program subaccount for the purpose of providing grants to state and county agencies and private entities to assist with public safety resources, including training law enforcement officers to be Drug Recognition Experts (DRE);
- Percentage of cannabis tax allocated towards public safety, public health and education;
- Creation of an open container law for cannabis;
- Requirement for impaired driving warning labels on all cannabis products;
- Requirement for all cannabis businesses open to the public to conspicuously post a sign notifying all patrons of the dangers of and possible sanctions for operating a vehicle under the influence of cannabis; and
- Requirement for data collection to understand social and economic trends of cannabis in the State, as well as to be informed of public health impacts;

HDOT also offers the following comments on the bill:

- The public safety grant program mentioned in this measure should also be used to train officers in Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE), which was created to address the gap in training between the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing and the DRE programs. ARIDE provides officers with general knowledge related to drug impairment.
- More funding may be needed within the public safety grant program for specialized training such as ARIDE, Drug Impairment Training for Educational Professionals and training that law enforcement provide to community members.
- In addition to appropriation for a state cannabis testing facility, funds should be appropriated for a forensic toxicology testing laboratory for law enforcement purposes.
- We are concerned with the “special event and social consumption permits” that could be available after the passage of rules to implement. Substantial safeguards will need to be implemented to ensure that event organizers, establishments and permit holders will be responsible for preventing driving while intoxicated after such events.
- Page 222, lines 10-16 – This expungement may violate 49 CFR 384.226 Prohibition on masking convictions, in which “the State must not mask, defer imposition of judgment, or allow an individual to enter into a diversion program that would prevent a commercial learner’s permit (CLP) or commercial driver’s license (CDL) holder’s conviction for any violation, in any type of motor vehicle, of a State or local traffic control law (other than parking, vehicle weight, or vehicle defect violations) from appearing on the CDLIS driver record, whether the driver was convicted for an offense committed in the State where the driver is licensed or another State.” We therefore recommend amending the language to: “had no subsequent alcohol or drug related enforcement contacts, except as provided by title 49, section 384.226, code of federal regulations.”

HDOT’s top priority is keeping Hawaii’s roadway users safe and reducing the number of serious injuries and fatalities on our roads. Despite the valuable safeguards outlined in the bill, we are concerned that the legalization of marijuana for personal use may result in increases in impaired driving-related injuries and fatalities on our roadways.

Cannabis can impair a driver’s cognitive function, affecting a driver’s time/space perception, reaction time, ability to concentrate, etc. Contrary to popular belief, marijuana does not make someone a better, more careful driver. According to the “Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) Examination Characteristics of Cannabis Impairment” study published in the July 2016 Accident Analysis & Prevention Journal, an evaluation of 302 toxicologically-confirmed cannabis-only DRE cases saw that in 72.3 percent of cases, one or more moving violations were listed as reasons for the traffic stop. Speeding was the number one violation (27.7 percent), followed by weaving (19.0 percent). Similarly, in a two-year study of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in drivers in Orange County, California, published in the August 2016 Journal of Forensic Science, the top five moving violations were speeding (24 percent), unable to maintain lane position (23.2 percent), ran red light or stop sign (13.0 percent), unsafe lane change (8.7 percent) and involved in a collision (8.3 percent).

In Hawaii, a local study on motor vehicle crash fatalities and undercompensated care associated with legalization on medical marijuana finds that “THC positivity among driver fatalities increased since legalization, with a threefold increase from 1993-2000 to 2001-2015. THC positivity among all injured patients tested at our highest level trauma center increased from 11 percent before to 20 percent after legalization. From 2011 to 2015, THC positive patients were significantly less likely to wear a seatbelt or helmet (33% vs 56%).” The study was published in the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery in May 2018.

In passing any legislation to legalize marijuana, Hawaii should closely observe the impacts decriminalization and legalization has had in other states.

- The 2021 Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area reports that there were 131 marijuana-related traffic fatalities in Colorado in 2020 – up from 55 in 2013.
- According to a 2017 Analysis of US Teen Driving After Using Marijuana published in 2020 in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 48.8 percent of teen drivers who use marijuana report driving under the influence.
- The Washington State Healthy Youth Survey found that in 2021, 15 percent of 12th graders rode with a driver who was using marijuana.
- According to an October 2018 report from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), an examination of police-reported crashes of all severities showed that “the legalization of retail sales in Colorado, Washington and Oregon was associated with a 5.2% higher rate of police-reported crashes compared with neighboring states that did not legalize retail sales.”

HDOT is primarily concerned about improving highway safety and protecting the lives of our community members and visitors. HDOT coordinates specialized training and certifies law enforcement officers to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs through its DRE program to combat this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 8:08:51 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimmer Horsen	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and Senators,

I Kimmer Horsen strongly oppose SB1613. MJ is still a harmful controlled substance and highly addictive like smoking, drinking, liquor consumption and harmful when under the influence. So much so that some impoverished peoples seek to feed their addictive habit rather than provide for their families.

Marijuana is the only ‘medication’ that is smoked, and, while still incompletely understood, there are legitimate concerns about long-term effects of marijuana smoke on the lungs.<sup>11,12</sup> Compared with cigarette smoke, marijuana smoke can result in three times the amount of inhaled tar and four times the amount of inhaled carbon-monoxide.<sup>13</sup> Further, smoking marijuana has been shown to be a risk factor for lung cancer in many<sup>14,15</sup> but not all<sup>16</sup> studies.

A growing myth among the public is that marijuana is not an addictive substance. Data clearly show that about 10% of those who use cannabis become addicted; this number is higher among adolescents.<sup>26</sup> Users who seek treatment for marijuana addiction average 10 years of daily use.<sup>27</sup> A withdrawal syndrome has been described, consisting of anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, depression, and changes in appetite<sup>28</sup> and affects as many as 44% of frequent users,<sup>29</sup> contributing to the addictive potential of the drug. This addictive potential may be less than that of opiates; but the belief, especially among adolescents, that the drug is not addictive is misguided.

Marijuana has been consistently shown to be a risk factor for schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.<sup>30–32</sup> The association between marijuana and schizophrenia fulfills many, but not all, of the standard criteria for the epidemiological establishment of causation, including experimental evidence,<sup>33,34</sup> temporal relationship,<sup>35–38</sup> biological gradient,<sup>30,31,39</sup> and biological plausibility.<sup>40</sup> Genetic variation may explain why marijuana use does not strongly fulfill remaining criteria, such as strength of association and specificity.<sup>41,42</sup> As these genetic variants are explored and further characterized, marijuana use may be shown to cause or

precipitate schizophrenia in a genetically vulnerable population. The risk of psychotic disorder is more pronounced when marijuana is used at an earlier age.<sup>32, 43</sup>

Marijuana use among adolescents has been increasing. Data that has tracked risk perception and use of marijuana among adolescents over decades clearly shows an inverse relationship; as adolescent risk perception wanes, marijuana use increases.<sup>61</sup> As more states legalize medical and recreational marijuana, risk perception is expected to decrease, causing the prevalence of use among adolescent to continue to rise. This is among the most concerning of issues about the drug's legalization because so many of the negative effects of marijuana—including cognitive impairment and risk for short- and long-term psychosis—are heightened when used during adolescence

Samuel T. Wilkinson, MD, is in the Department of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, Ct.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 8:19:32 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lauren Henson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Lauren Henson, and I live in Honolulu. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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.

Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.
- Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
- S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
- Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
- Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
- 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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Lauren Henson

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 8:35:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alice Abellanida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. Please vote no on this bill.



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 8:44:52 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Kristen and I live in the Makiki Punchbowl area. I've never used cannabis before (though there have been opportunities) or had any need/desire to, but I'm testifying in SUPPORT of S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Cannabis legalization is important to me because it is built upon principles of compassion, social justice, harm reduction, autonomy and freedom of choice—things I value as a Christian and person of faith.

I was a little disappointed, but not surprised, at the number of local churches and faith-based leaders that spoke in opposition to cannabis legalization and decriminalization. I know that their position was rooted in care and based off personal individual stories, but I believe we must consider a larger view.

Prohibiting cannabis does 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.

I heard a lot of testifiers say, “Think of the kids.” I’ve worked in youth ministry for years and at 30 years old, I’m not so far from youth myself. I know that youth are dealing with a lot in today’s world. Simply saying, “Drugs are bad, don’t use them,” and banning them (which doesn’t actually stop them from being used) is not effective. There are larger issues at play that must be addressed, like why are people turning to drugs in the first place?

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.

By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai’i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. The evidence is clear that current policies have failed. Please listen to the experts and support S.B. 1613 to legalize (and regulate) adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Kristen Young

Honolulu, 96813

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 8:55:24 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Phil Robertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I favor the legislation.

**LATE**



Committees: Health & Human Services and Judiciary  
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 9:30am  
Place: Conference Room 325 & Via Videoconference  
Re: **Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i: In SUPPORT of SB1613 Relating to Cannabis**

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

ACLU of Hawai'i **supports SB1613 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

### ***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.<sup>4</sup>

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**

<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
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 Hawai'i's jails and prisons.<sup>5</sup> Many people are living in inhumane and unconstitutional conditions of

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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."

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/es\\_final\\_web\\_0.pdf](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](https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/factsheets_final_web_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <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.

SB1613 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 SB1613.

Sincerely,

**Carrie Ann Shirota**

Carrie Ann Shirota

Policy Director

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*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.*



**LATE**

## Hawai'i Alliance for Cannabis Reform In Support of SB 1613

February 11, 2025

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard and members of the Senate Health and Human Services and Judiciary committees:

Chair San Buenaventura's SB 1613 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, SB 1613 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. SB 1613 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 SB 1613 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 ♦

Chamber of Sustainable Commerce ♦ 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,”

February 12, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

As a Board-Certified Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with 20 years of clinical experience, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of THC on the developing brains of children, teens, and young adults. My concern, based on both clinical observation and research, is that the real human risks of THC exposure far outweigh its potential benefits. The adolescent and young adult brain undergoes critical development, and exposure to modern high-potency THC products can lead to long-term cognitive deficits, psychiatric disorders, and impaired executive function—consequences that are too often irreversible.

At our clinics, where we assess and treat hundreds of children annually, we are seeing an alarming increase in teens and young adults presenting with symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia associated with THC consumption. This was rare just a few years ago. Modern marijuana is far more concentrated than in previous decades, with THC levels often exceeding 80-90% in certain products, amplifying the risk of cannabis-induced brain dysfunction, psychosis, addiction, and cognitive dysfunction.

The broad legalization of marijuana, particularly without strict regulation of potency and access, poses significant public health risks, including:

- Increased adolescent and young adult use despite legal age restrictions
- Higher rates of cannabis use disorder (addiction)
- Accidental THC exposures in children
- Impaired driving and safety concerns

While there may be specific medical applications for THC, these should be managed on a case-by-case basis under physician supervision to ensure appropriate dosing, monitoring, and risk mitigation. In my professional opinion, maintaining current regulations on THC may help to minimize the number of people exposed to harm while maximizing potential medical benefits within the context of a doctor-patient relationship. Expanding access without careful personalized medical oversight risks widespread unintended consequences, particularly for vulnerable populations (kids, teens, and young adults with developing brains).



I strongly urge policymakers and healthcare professionals to prioritize the long-term well-being of children and adolescents by maintaining strict THC regulations, promoting public education on the risks of high-potency cannabis, and ensuring that any medical use remains under the guidance of licensed physicians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keifer", written in a cursive style.

Jason Keifer, M.D.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 9:28:26 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Stensrud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill represents Hawaii's best attempt to do something that has been done successfully in half of the country.

we should support this bill because legal markets drive illegal street level dealers out of business, which denies minors purchasing opportunities due to legal shops checking customer ID's - twice: when customers enter the store and again when they purchase at the register.

the legacy farmer provisions are very innovative and this bill represents a great opportunity to earn new tax revenue from those who choose to consume, many of whom would happily pay taxes on cannabis.

please pass this commonsense bill. The state needs it.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 9:29:11 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Reina Loughlin	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill. The effects of recreational use of marijuana on a person's mind and body is inhibiting. It is wreckless to legalize and make marijuana easily accessible and promoted for recreational use as there'll be no monitoring it from becoming a problem among young children. It's known to be an addictive substance, which is not what we want, to have our public addicted to marijuana additional to the present drug use epidemic, resulting in societal breakdown of crime, unemployment, health and family issues, school drop out,...

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 9:37:11 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Diliaur Tellei	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and committee members:

I'm writing to testify in SUPPORT of SB 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

It's time to legalize this substance which is by many accounts already prevalent in the islands. Providing an avenue to decriminalize and tax cannabis use will benefit the state by saving resources on enforcement and creating new revenue streams which we may dearly need over the next few years. Therefore, I respectfully urge you to pass this measure.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 9:42:30 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis Muller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice chairs and Committe members,

I am writing in support of SB1613 for the adult use of cannabis in Hawai'i. As both a **public health professional and patient**, I have witnessed the challenges within our current system. I also hold a **Master's in Cannabis Science and Therapeutics** from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, which has given me a deep understanding of both the benefits and regulatory needs of cannabis.

As a Cannbinoid educator I find that many people have little to no knowledge about cannabis and much of which is known is stigma and not science. I kindly ask that you take the time to watch this video and understand how and why cannabis works in the body. Every mammal on this planet earth has an endocannabinoid system that is responsible for keeping our body inbalance. Our body produces cannbinoids that interact with this system and so does the cannabis plant. The plants cannbinoids mimic our own bodys endocannabinoids.

<https://youtu.be/oJbOO9P2NYQ?si=490PwhvF5fdpTsBO>

Why we need to pass SB1613. Over the past few years, Hawai'i's **medical cannabis program has seen a decline in patient numbers**, largely due to the **high cost and limited access** to legal cannabis. At the same time, we have seen a surge in **semi-synthetic hemp products** being shipped in from the mainland and sold at kiosks across the islands. These unregulated products **lack proper testing**, contain **unknown levels of THC, pesticides, and other contaminants**, and pose **serious risks to public health**. I agree with you concerns for our youth, these shops **have no age restrictions**, making it easy for youth to access unsafe cannabis-like substances.

**SB1613 will provide a safer alternative** by establishing a **regulated market for tested, high-quality cannabis products** for adults 21 and older. Open business opportunities for Kanaka ohana to come back home, create opportunity for work force development offering better paying jobs and career longevity, establish cannabis research with local universities and government and offer safe affordable tested medicine for patients whether they have a 329 card or not. If we do not provide a legal and safe avenue for adult use, **these unregulated hemp shops will continue to thrive, putting both consumers and our youth at risk**. SB1613 offers a better path—one that **eliminates these dangerous products, safeguards our youth, and reinvests in our communities**.

Furthermore, **adult-use cannabis tax revenue will greatly benefit Hawai'i**, particularly for those who do not consume cannabis. In **Colorado**, cannabis tax revenue has funded **education, public health initiatives, infrastructure, and law enforcement**. Programs such as the **BEST Program** have improved schools, while public health funding supports **substance abuse prevention and mental health services**. Local governments have used the revenue for **road repairs, update municipal buildings, create affordable housing, and public safety efforts**. Since legalization, Colorado has collected **over \$2 billion** in cannabis tax revenue, demonstrating the economic and social benefits of a regulated market.

I urge you to support SB1613. This bill will **protect our youth** from dangerous, unregulated products while ensuring that cannabis tax revenue is reinvested into our communities and offer profitable business opportunities for Kanaka. Please support SB1613 for a safer, healthier Hawai'i.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,**  
Alexis Muller



**LATE**

**SB-1613**

Submitted on: 2/13/2025 10:27:47 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/13/2025 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
KODA DAILY	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs San Buenaventura and Rhoads, Vice Chairs Aquino and Gabbard, and Committee Members,

My name is Koda, and I live in Kalihi. I'm testifying in support of S.B. 1613 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. Here are the facts:

- Under current law, possession of over three grams is punishable with up to 30 days in jail, even though legalization has widespread support in Hawai'i.
  - Discriminatory enforcement of cannabis prohibition means people of color are disproportionately incarcerated and face the collateral consequences of criminalization—reduced access to employment, housing, education, and public benefit offerings.
  - S.B. 1613 creates a pathway to record expungement for those dealing with the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction for cannabis-related crimes.
  - Ending cannabis prohibition in Hawai'i will displace the illicit market and free up law enforcement resources to focus on more serious crime.
  
  - Teen marijuana use has decreased as states legalized and regulated cannabis for adults.
  - 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.
- By enacting S.B. 1613, Hawai'i will stop its unnecessary criminalization of cannabis and begin healing some of the harms inflicted on the people and communities most impacted by the war on drugs. Please support S.B. 1613 to legalize adult-use cannabis.

Mahalo for scheduling and considering this bill,

Koda