

**Sangray, Kathy**

**From:** leg-noreply@mt.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 31, 2021 12:18 PM  
**To:** LEG Applications Email Backup; LEG Committee-House Taxation testimony  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Bill HB-670: Generally revise laws to implement recreational marijuana program 2021-04-01 08:00 AM - (H) Taxation Successfully Submitted on 03-31-21 12:18

Details:

Bill: HB-670: Generally revise laws to implement recreational marijuana program 2021-04-01 08:00 AM - (H) Taxation  
Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

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Written Statement: Cannabis has had a difficult history. The Founding Fathers deemed it a vital crop and even before that it was mandatory in Jamestown in the 1600's, punishable by a fine or imprisonment for those that did not plant it. For nearly a hundred years it was described in the US Pharmacopeia. We made everything with it; medicine, food, rope, cloth, oil, you name it. It was vital to the economy of our forming nation and to the survival of people on the frontier. Now, we can make biofuel, biodegradable plastics, and make people seem more tolerable when they are less tolerant. I voted for a recreational cannabis industry. There are any number of reasons for adults to be permitted to use this plant that we have cultivated for 10,000 years. To begin with, the federal government lists cannabis as a schedule 1 substance, while they list cocaine and methamphetamine as schedule 2 substances, things that are considered by the federal government to be safer and have less potential for abuse than marijuana. For reference, the Lethal Dose that kills half of test subjects (LD50) in milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) for methamphetamine is 55mg/kg, cocaine is 95.1 mg/kg, and combusted marijuana inhaled is estimated at 1,800,000 mg/kg or 18kg/kg, so 2 persons would need to consume 18 times their body weight in cannabis each before one of them might die.

It is currently illegal at the federal level and while it may bring us into conflict with federal law, I feel as my name's sake, Thomas Jefferson, and as Martin Luther King JR did, "if a law is unjust, a man is not only right to disobey it, he is obligated to do so." Our marijuana laws go back to a time of racism and xenophobia. On the floor of the Texas Senate, a proponent of marijuana laws declared, "All Mexicans are crazy, and this stuff [marijuana] is what makes them crazy." Another proponent said, "Give one of these Mexican beet field workers a couple of puffs on a marijuana cigarette and he thinks he is in the bullring at Barcelona." Harry Anslinger himself said, "There are 100,000 total marijuana smokers in the US and most are Negroes, Hispanics, Filipinos and entertainers. Their satanic music, jazz and swing result from marijuana use. This marijuana causes white women to seek sexual relations with Negroes, entertainers and many others...Reefer makes darkies think they're as good as white men." The racist views of our past are still shaping our future.

Marijuana was not banned because it was harmful to the individual, it was banned because it was harmful to an intolerant society. The inappropriately named Temperance Movement, Prohibition is also tied into the banning of other substances that were available at the time and laws covering those items were not repealed along with the Great Experiment. We still have people dying in Montana because they utilize the black market for a product that is legal in other jurisdictions. There is no reason for the crime and violence associated with a plant that anyone can grow, and at one time were required to in the first American settlement. There is no reason for our prisons to be full of non violent offenders that sold a personal use amount to what is now a lawful user. The lives and money wasted by these policies for over 80 years is appalling. We have a chance to do better, to end the black market and make good use of a new source of revenue.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "Malo periculosam, libertatem quam quietam servitutem." I would also prefer the dangers of too much liberty over the dangers of servitude to the whim of an overbearing government.

Files:

Testify via Zoom: Yes

Zoom Method: Computer