

Testimony of Michael Askew, Director of Recovery Advocacy

Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery
Before the Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2021

Good Morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. It's an honor to sit before you today. I am Michael Askew, Director of Recovery Advocacy, for the Connecticut Community for Addition Recovery (CCAR) and I am offering testimony regarding S.B. No. 888 (AN ACT RESPONSIBLY AND EQUITABLY REGULATING ADULT-USE CANNABIS).

In high school I aspired to become an architectural draftsman. As an elective, I choose my four years to study architectural drafting and I became really good at it, by my senior year. I remember in 69, beginning to smoke marijuana. Unlike my friends, I became more dependent over time. From the age of 16-34 years old, I engaged in numerous types of drug use and eventually became a full pledge addict using illicit drugs. I am now in recovery from substance use since 1989, and I found recovery during my last prison sentence after having did 5 other bids. Marijuana started this path. An addiction to illicit drugs changes the way a person's brain works, and consequently, the way they think and act. It did that in my high school years, as I was unable to graduate with my class of 72 as a result of my actions and inability to make rational decisions.

Our country has seen the impact that opioid addiction has made and in Connecticut, CCAR has made steps to provide support and resources to those that are having major challenges in finding solutions to a serious problem. Marijuana use will present many challenges as well. We must be prepared for the aftermath, as we listened to many experts who shared with us last year from Colorado and other parts of the country.

I believe there most certainly will be a need to provide prevention, treatment and recovery services at a much larger extent than we may be aware of. The Opioid Crisis, we are in now, has given us data to show the larger scale of support one needs with reclaiming their lives. Medical needs, Recovery Supports, Housing, Employment, just to name a few, are critical in their success but challenging to obtain. Recovery Coaching has been a saving grace for many seeking their way out of their struggle.

May we prepare ourselves for what may be a huge undertaking in making sure our country and the great state of Connecticut is safe and ready if you pass this bill.

Thanks for your time and consideration in my testimony.

Sincerely,

Michael Askew