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Re: SB282

My name is Jessica McCleary Olson and I am a resident of Wichita, KS. Oletha Faust-Goudeau is my Senator and Gail Finney is my Representative. I am speaking on behalf of myself today and offering a testimonial in favor of amending Page 3 Line 3 of SB282. We would like to see *Mitagyna Speciosa*, otherwise known as Kratom, be removed from this bill.

I have been a Kratom user for over four years and I use to help manage chronic pain. I have been suffering from chronic pain for over 21 years. It's been a very long journey to not only figure out where the pain originates from and why, but also to treat and eradicate the symptoms. I suspect that the initial symptoms began as a result of a car accident I had when I was 19 years old. I hit a drunk driver that was making an illegal left turn as I was entering an intersection. By age 24, I was referred to my first physical therapist. The causation was unknown at that time, and an explanation was not explored. I received no x-rays, MRI or any other type of testing or exploration. I also did not seek any pharmaceutical medication to treat symptoms at that time. As the years past, I tried several types of treatments and medications to alleviate pain symptoms.

All pain is caused by an inflammatory response that is caused by a foreign invader to the body or an acute injury. It is the bodies signal that something is not right and something needs medical attention. However, preventive treatment is not a focus in the American healthcare system; we focus on alleviating symptoms rather than fixing the problem. Without proper diagnosis as to what is causing the pain, a proper treatment can not be prescribed. I fell into this no win situation because of the cost associated with researching causation of my pain symptoms. I believe most chronic pain sufferers experience this type of lapse in causation focused treatment. Causation is usually never explored until it is time for costly treatments or surgery.

When I started this journey I had access to insurance through my ex-husband's insurance, and I was able to get some treatments and medication at a reasonable price. Two treatments that are often not covered by insurance are chiropractic and massage therapy. I have found both of those treatments beneficial, but again for proper treatment you have to research providers for yourself. Physicians do not often make referrals to those medical disciplines, and I believe this

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has to do again with insurers not covering cost and as a result Primary Care Physicians do not often network with these healthcare specialist.

When my ex-husband started a new job that did not have insurance benefits I was able to get coverage for myself and my children on my own at an affordable price. When we divorced and I moved back to Kansas most insurance companies would not cover me due to pre-existing conditions. However one company was willing to but the price was more than I could afford. A few years later no one was willing to cover me. A high risk insurance company denied me and after that I quit searching. Under the Affordable Care Act I became eligible for insurance, but once again premiums were out of my price range in this state, and the deductibles for the lowest premium were ridiculously high and it did not make financial sense so I go without insurance. I have learned to ration my healthcare since I moved to Kansas since I have lived without coverage since 2006. I only seek medical care when it is absolutely necessary to do so. It cost me eighty five dollar for an office visit. If I require anything other than a prescription, my cost is usually over three hundred.

In 2014, I finally decided that I needed to know what the causation, it had been suspected that I had a pinched nerve since symptomatology was similar. I did the research and then conferred with my doctor and he concluded that that was a possibility. He had advised against getting an MRI because of the cost, but I thought it was important for treatment purposes. At that time, the diagnosis was minimal stenosis, but I learned that an MRI can not see where a nerve is being entrapped, especially if the entrapment is caused by soft tissue. So I did not get the answers I was seeking. My condition worsened and I decided to have another MRI because I wanted to work with a pain specialist again. I was looking for solutions not a band aid. In 2016, the MRI indicated that I have stenosis from C-3 and C-7, and three bulging disc. The MRI also indicated that I have large cyst on my thyroid that was there in 2014, but apparently were not large enough for my doctor to alert me of. Both MRIs cost me around two thousand and both went into collections. And now I have the added cost of yearly sonograms to keep an eye on the thyroid issue. I will explain later why that may be an caused by prescription medications used for treating my pain issue.

I have been taking prescription pain relievers on and off since I was 28. I have to be very careful with prescription medication because I am an alcoholic and I have had an issue with depression since I was five years old. When I was 30 I was prescribed Methadone. Methadone is a highly addictive substance that is usually used to treat illegal opioid addictions. It is a very cheap and very effective pain reliever. It was very effective for me, but I began abusing it. After two months, I decided it was no longer a good idea for me to continue to refill my prescription. I could not communicate this to my pain management doctor at that time because I would then no longer be able to use any kind of prescription pain reliever. I was not interested in pain relievers after that experience, so at 37 I tried a few different medications. One was a muscle relaxer that again was very effective and not very expensive. But once again I began abusing the medication, this medication actually made me feel like I was intoxicated. I made the decision once again to not take this medication any longer, and this time I told my doctor why. He was

unaware that this medication could be abused for that reason. Since that time it has become a restricted use medication. At age 40 I began a regimen, of using a prescription hydrocodone and then an oxycodone (the hydro upsets my stomach), monthly. I used it two weeks on and two weeks off. I use it this way so I can have a break from pain. I do not want to be on it all the time because all prescription pain relievers interfere with my antidepressant medications rendering them not as effective. I also discovered, and not my pharmacist nor my physician explained this to me, that if you take these medications on a daily basis you will go through withdrawal symptoms when you try to stop. Thus far I have not had to deal with that issue.

So not only do many medications interfere with my antidepressant, some are addictive in nature, some are above my ability to afford, but some may also be the cause of my thyroid cyst. My cyst thus far are benign, and are only causing minimal discomfort. As soon as I found out I had these cyst, I researched possible causes. The first thing I found was that prescription opiates have been linked to thyroid cyst.

Kratom is by far the best alternative I have to manage my pain symptoms. Before I found Kratom I spent a lot of time being an inactive person. During the times I was not taking a prescription pain reliever I spent a lot of time alternating between Ice packs and a heating pad and limiting the use of my right arm which seems to be aggravating the nerve that is being pinched. Kratom does not appear to interfere with my antidepressants. It actually appears to make them more effective, but of course this is a subjective analysis. It has greatly improved my life by allowing me to remain relatively pain free and by helping me with mood stabilization. As I mentioned before, I have suffered from depression for a long time, and chronic pain exacerbates that depression. Pain is frustrating and exhausting. Everyday seems to be dictated by my pain levels for that day. Kratom allows me to remain a productive person. Without it my choices are going to be even more limited.

I have never been in legal trouble for anything other than a traffic ticket. I have never been to jail and I have never been arrested. By not amending SB282, I am going to have to choose between medications that come with a risk of dependency and interactions with other medications, or criminal activity. Our judicial system is already overburdened with citizens that are being incarcerated because of their illegal use of scheduled substances. Do not add this to the list, and make us who are seeking to only better our lives, criminals. It cost the state money to house us as criminals and it also limits our ability to give back to our society by being working and tax paying individuals. When citizens sit in jail they not only lose jobs, but they also lose their ability to replace the jobs they lose. With jail time and citations always comes fines. When we are not working, or are not able to get jobs, we are not able to pay those fines.

Turning substance abusers into criminals is not an adequate way to fight substance abuse. Many substance abusers are self medicating an addiction they began because of dependence on a prescription medication. Making them criminals creates a perpetual cycle they can not rise above. Adding Kratom to the list will create this cycle for people who otherwise might be productive people if given the right to make medical decisions for themselves. Our safe

alternatives for pain management are limited as it is. I think there is a clear case for Kratom being a safe alternative to health problems that would otherwise be treated with prescription pharmaceuticals that come with a long list of unwanted and possibly harmful side effects and a risk for physical dependence. I am aware that the committee has been educated on the science of Kratom and that many of you have done your own research, so I will refrain from continuing that discussion here.

In a healthcare system that is not able to focus on preventative health and education because of the extreme cost associated with that care, it is important to allow the citizens of this state to have as many options as they can legally and safely have to treat their own conditions. We need adequate access to preventative healthcare and education, but many of us don't. Until all of us have the same access to that care, and we are able to receive the treatment we need to correct the healthcare problems we suffer from, we must be allowed to be trusted to make our own decisions and treat ourselves without fear of criminal repercussions. Not giving us access and then criminalizing our actions is unfair and its unproductive. A healthy population is a working populations. A working population is a tax paying population. Please don't take this away from us too.

Thank you for your time, and for allowing me to speak on this issue. And thank you for allowing us to educate you on this topic and for thinking about it before you react and vote on a subject you have not had time to educate yourselves on. We trust in you to make educated decisions and to represent us. I am honored to have been apart of this fundamental process. Thank you for allowing me to do so.