

Dear Chairman Suellentrop and state of Kansas elected officials,

As a Topeka native and bloodline relative of Benjamin Rush, the Father of American Psychiatry and signer of the Declaration of Independence, I am grateful for your dedication to the citizens of our great state. I am honored to have the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on Senate Bill 113, establishing a medical cannabis program in the state. I understand fully and do not take lightly the immense effort or sacrifices required to allow our democracy to operate effectively as stated in the US and Kansas Constitutions. It is the will of the people that must prevail, and it is our civic duty to participate in the redressing of grievances which is my only peaceful intent here. Statistics now show the majority of Kansans are in agreement with the rest of US populations in accepting cannabis as medicine and that our laws must reflect this underlying shift. In fact, during 2019 Kansas will become 100% surrounded by all four border states offering medical cannabis to their citizens.

While acknowledging the importance of evidence-based, ethical medicine in addition to the still-necessary pharmaceutical and biochemical industries, not only is the legalization of cannabis inevitable throughout our union and globally due to findings from technological advancements; more importantly the key will be how it is ultimately accomplished to give this therapeutic therapy back to society's public health toolbox. After all, it is a scientific and undisputed fact that the American Medical Association lobbied to keep the cannabis plant as part of the US Pharmacopeia during the hearings that enacted the 1937 Marihuana Tax Act. Cannabis has been used medicinally for thousands of years before it was ever inscribed on any written or legal documentation. This anthropologic and complex history proves the molecularly robust herb is without question a friend to humans; which is why the topic of prohibition never went away once it occurred. Kansans deserve the same due diligence and consideration from our elected officials as similar bills were given by the devoted volunteers and public health professionals who collaborated for years to create proposed legislation such as the Kansas Safe Access Act.

Education addresses many problems in society, an institution Kansas is historically known for valuing with great intensity. As a graduate of our state's premiere teaching school, Emporia State University, I have learned to embrace the necessity of self-learning. This is why I have taken it upon myself to absorb as much knowledge as possible about society's historical relationship with one of the most important of all medicinal plants. After journeys to meet dozens of industry experts at conferences such as the National Cannabis Summit, CannaGrow Expo, Northern Colorado Hemp Expo and the World Hemp Congress, I can confidently say there is massive attention and focus towards progressive and ecologically sustainable practices, economic development in multiple sectors to help rebuild communities, and emphasis to delivering patients the best quality medicine. So much time and money has been invested in the now 33 legal states, however this current bill contains limited wisdom from each state's lesson in regulation. There are better options and I suggest allowing amendments to improve SB113.

Numerous topic areas have been studied over decades about the benefits of cannabis (much of which is unfortunately biased towards searching for negative outcomes), but the old landscape of scientific research is rapidly changing. Having recently reintroduced industrial uses of hemp, Kansas now has the chance to join as an essential medical contributor with assets such as the legacy of Menninger's, Kansas University Medical facilities, VA hospitals treating our veterans, Stormont-Vail (Mayo Clinic) and other health-based organizations that are primed to make the most of this opportunity. This is our time to adapt to correctly establish guidelines for professionals, patients, and future generations. We have the talented people and systems in place to ensure medical cannabis is a positive change for Kansas, and at the same time demonstrate the Heartland still has the most important priorities in mind for the common good.

Warmest regards,
Kelly Rippel