

The Connecticut General Assembly



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LAWMAKERS URGE SUPPORT FOR THE LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION OF MARIJUANA FOR ADULT USE

Before citizens were slated to give public testimony on a proposal to regulate the retail sale, growth and use of marijuana by adults ages 21 and over, **state Reps. Josh Elliott, Mike D’Agostino, Steve Stafstrom, Juan Candelaria and Robyn Porter** voiced their support for [House Bill 5458](#).

H.B. 5458 “An Act Concerning the Regulation of the Retail Sale of Marijuana,” outlines the definitions necessary for the legal cultivation, distribution, retail sales and consumer use of marijuana.

“For decades and decades, we have been living under a paradigm of prohibition and what we have seen is that our black and brown brothers and sisters are disproportionately affected by these laws. Now that we have seen what it has done to communities of color, we need to do our best to ensure that we are proactive to remedy these effects,” said **Elliott**, D-Hamden. “With Massachusetts slated to begin the retail sale of marijuana in June, the time is now to pass legislation that permits the retail sale of cannabis in Connecticut. Failing to move this legislation forward means marijuana will become de facto legalized in our state and we will lose out on the revenue.”

The legislature’s General Law Committee held a public hearing on the proposed bill Thursday, and the Judiciary Committee is expected to hear public testimony on the legalization, taxation and regulation of the retail sale and recreational use of marijuana on Monday, March 19. The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee is also expected to hold a public hearing on the proposal.

“As we continue to discuss how Connecticut would permit the use and retail sale of marijuana for adults ages 21 and over, it is vital that we create a regulatory framework. Six years ago, the General Law Committee created a successful outline for the implementation of a robust medical marijuana program. We need to take that regulatory architecture and apply it and modify it to the retail sale of cannabis for adult use in Connecticut,” said **D’Agostino**, D-Hamden, House chairman of the General Law Committee.

“Marijuana is less addictive and less harmful than at least three other substances – alcohol, tobacco and opioid medication – that we legalize and regulate in Connecticut. While we have found a regulatory structure for these three substances, we have not created a regulatory framework for the retail sale of marijuana for adults 21 and over. On Monday, the legislature’s Judiciary Committee will hold a public hearing to determine if marijuana should be legalized in Connecticut. I support that effort so that we can

bring the sale and regulation of marijuana out of the shadows and off our streets,” said **Stafstrom**, House vice chairman of the Judiciary Committee, D-Bridgeport.

“There is no better time than the present to finally pass a responsible law governing the legal use of marijuana. In a very short time, Connecticut has become a leader on the implementation of medical marijuana and we can do the same with legal marijuana. Regulated marijuana will ensure a quality product – free of harmful additives – while taking its production and sale out of the hands of drug dealers. This is smart and reasonable legislation whose time is long overdue,” said **Candelaria**, D-New Haven.

“Regulating and legalizing marijuana for adult use will help address one of Connecticut’s largest social issues. Many low-level offenders who are arrested for marijuana possession serve more time in prison than some who have committed horrific crimes. For too long, our mentality has been to incarcerate instead of educate when it comes to drug-related offenses. By legalizing and regulating marijuana, we can educate society on its effects and begin to address our inequality issues,” said **Porter**, D-New Haven.

The Marijuana Policy Project and the Connecticut Coalition to Regulate Marijuana have also voiced support for H.B. 5458.

“As a Connecticut native and as director of the Connecticut Coalition to Regulate Marijuana, I am proud to say I strongly support H.B. 5458,” said Sam Tracy. “Connecticut needs to regulate marijuana like alcohol, so I thank the General Law Committee for drafting this bill and moving the conversation forward in our state. I urge the members of the committee to support this bill, just as 71 percent of Connecticut residents support the legalization, regulation and taxation of marijuana for adult use.”

Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon and Washington all permit the sale of marijuana for adult use. In January, Vermont’s governor signed into law a bill that will allow the state to authorize the adult use of marijuana. The law is slated to take effect July 1.

A proposal to regulate the use of cannabis for adults in Connecticut comes nearly six years after the state permitted medical marijuana. Similar to medical marijuana, legal, adult use of marijuana will be regulated by the state Department of Consumer Protection.

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