

House Committee on Corporations
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
April 7, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 5829

Dear Chairman Solomon,

I am writing in support of the amendments to HB5829. As a Woonsocket resident for over ten years, I have seen the direct harms resulting from the enforcement of cannabis-related laws. The enforcement of cannabis-related laws has disproportionately affected low-income communities, minorities, and urban communities.

I strongly support the amendments to the bill which declare that a portion of the revenue from cannabis should be returned to disproportionately impacted areas. The funding could be used in Woonsocket for things like expanding mental health access, improving public housing, development of affordable housing, homeownership programs. Additionally, we're seeing a crisis in our youth right now. Students are dealing with mental health and adverse childhood events that are affecting their education. Students are violent towards each other and staff. This funding could be used to expand mental health services in K-12 schools, expand access to after school programs, provide scholarships for students.

The legislation also suggests that funding could be used towards health subsidies including in-home health care services for elderly and disabled residents. This is something that is direly needed in Woonsocket. The largest age groups in Woonsocket are the 65+ and under 18, and those are the two groups that need the most help right now. The emergency room at Landmark is constantly overflowing and on diversion. This funding could alleviate some of the strain on emergency services.

This amendment is a chance to close the gap between the core cities and the rest of Rhode Island.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Veronicka Vega

Woonsocket Resident