

# Senate Judiciary Committee

*Pete Mulvey 271-4063*

**HB 75-FN**, legalizing cannabis for persons 21 years of age or older.

**Hearing Date:** March 25, 2025

**Time Opened:** 2:56 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 3:17 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gannon, Abbas, Altschiller and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senator Carson

**Bill Analysis:** This bill legalizes the possession and use of cannabis for persons 21 years of age and older.

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**Sponsors:**  
Rep. Verville

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**Who supports the bill:** 29 individuals signed in support of HB 75-FN. Contact Pete Mulvey (peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov) for further details.

**Who opposes the bill:** 11 individuals signed in opposition to HB 75-FN Contact Pete Mulvey (peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov) for further details.

**Who is neutral on the bill:** one individual signed in as neutral for HB 75-FN. Contact Pete Mulvey (peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov) for further details.

## **Summary of testimony :**

### **Representative Keith Ammon**

#### **Hillsborough- District 42**

- Representative Ammon stated that he was speaking on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative Kevin Verville, who was not able to attend.
- Rep. Ammon noted that HB 75 was the simplest solution to achieve the desires of many constituents concerned with the legal status of cannabis.
  - HB 75 removed all references to cannabis in state RSAs, except the prohibition for minors and the medical cannabis statutes.
- Rep. Ammon explained that HB 75 would keep the State out of the cannabis business while also ending the failed policy that is criminal prohibition.
  - By criminalizing cannabis use, users must go to the black market where they are exposed to other illicit substances or conduct.

- Additionally, criminalization of cannabis had created criminals out of otherwise productive members of society.
- HB 75 shifted the burden of enforcement from the State to the Federal government. Rep. Ammon suggested that the resources saved locally can be used to combat narcotics and the opioid crisis.
  - Rep. Ammon believed HB 75 would keep the State out of the marijuana business and prevent the expansion of government.
- Sen. Gannon asked if it would be a concern that the product on the streets could be tainted without state control.
  - Rep. Ammon stated that he was not the prime sponsor of the bill and did not wish to infer.

## **Sue Homola**

### **Smart Approaches to Marijuana New Hampshire**

- Ms. Homola stated that there were negative public health outcomes which coincided with marijuana legalization.
- Ms. Homola stated that for every dollar the state received in revenue from marijuana, it would cost four times as much for criminal justice and public health mitigation.
- Ms. Homola argued that public support for legalization was, in fact, not strong.
  - Public support was starting to wane because of reports on how legalization was so bad.
- Ms. Homola stated that concerns raised regarding transportation of patients to alternative treatment centers were invalid given the designated caregiver program.
  - The purpose of the program was to help patients access therapeutic cannabis that could not otherwise do so on their own.
- Ms. Homola also stated that state sanctioned ATCs gave away nearly half a million dollars in discounts on products.

## **Pat Sullivan**

### **New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police**

- Chief Sullivan stated that the association opposed legislation on the grounds that HB 75 would keep the black market in place, would not provide for any quality control or government oversight, and that there would be no income to the State to cover enforcement and treatment costs.
- Chief Sullivan noted that there would also be no penalty for sales.
- Sen. Gannon asked if poly-use (*the concurrent or consecutive ingestion of various substances*) would increase if HB 75 were to go into effect.
  - Chief Sullivan stated that poly-use was a huge concern, especially with the increase in automobile fatalities.
  - The use of marijuana combined with alcohol, or any other substance only increased the likelihood of impairment on roadways.
- Sen. Gannon asked if legalization would be a bad idea.
  - Chief Sullivan believed legalization would be a very bad idea.

## **Dr. Joe Hannon**

- Dr. Hannon stated his support for HB 75-FN which represented long overdue progress in cannabis policy and civil rights in New Hampshire.
- Prohibition had failed to keep cannabis out of the hands of youth, failed public health, and failed to provide justice.
  - Instead, Prohibition has led to unnecessary arrests, racial disparities, and a thriving illicit market.
- Dr. Hannon emphasized that HB 75 would legalize cannabis to adults 21 years of age or older, which was a policy that had already been adopted by neighboring states.
- Adults will no longer face consequences for personal choices that are safer than alcohol consumption.
- Dr. Hannon stated that under HB 75, the State may begin to formulate a regulatory framework which prioritized health, public safety, and economic opportunity.
- Dr. Hannon suggested that concerns brought up regarding youth accessibility and impaired driving were preexisting concerns, and believed that legalization would provide better tools to manage them via public education and other protocols.
- Legalization was also a civil rights issue considering that thousands of New Hampshire residents, a disproportionate number of whom are from marginalized communities, have faced lasting consequences for cannabis possession.
- Dr. Hannon urged the committee to vote ought to pass.
- Dr. Hannon clarified an issue raised earlier and stated that not everyone in the therapeutic cannabis program had a caretaker or the means to get one.
  - Senior citizens were disproportionately affected.
- Dr. Hannon elaborated that issues arose from individuals weary to be on government lists relative to therapeutic cannabis and emphasized that people were supposed to be protected from self-incrimination.
- Vermont successfully legalized cannabis prior to any regulatory framework being in place.
- Dr. Hannon asked the committee to reflect on any situations where prohibition had helped rather than harmed society as a whole.
- Sen. Gannon asked if cannabis use would increase, particularly among the youth, if it were to be legalized.
  - Dr. Hannon replied that usage had gone up in some age groups and down in others.
  - Overall, as some age groups' usage rose, their usage of alcohol decreased.
  - Dr. Hannon clarified that despite poly-usage being a concern, prohibition had not negated its prevalence.
  - Under HB 75, there would be no stigma associated with the State's potential involvement with the sale of cannabis as the State is with alcohol.
- Sen. Abbas asked if Dr. Hannon supported past legislation on cannabis legalization.
  - Dr. Hannon replied that he did not support State controlled cannabis.
- Sen. Abbas asked how HB 75 would benefit marginalized communities.
  - Dr. Hannon stated that 4-5 times more minorities were arrested for cannabis related crimes and suggested that HB 75 would eliminate those disparities.
- Sen. Gannon asked if usage increased with legalization.
  - Dr. Hannon stated that it varied. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an initial uptick of consumption when alcohol was legalized, albeit usage moderated over time.
- Sen. Gannon then asked if automobile fatalities would be more prevalent if usage increased.
  - Dr. Hannon did not find any evidence for such outcomes in other state's data.

- Sen. Gannon expressed that he may have tried cannabis in his youth had it been legal and found that legalization fostered experimentation.
- Sen. Abbas asked how the studies, outcomes, or trends that Dr. Hannon cited would compare with the form of legalization in HB 75, where there was no regulatory oversight.
  - Dr. Hannon stated that he did not know of any studies off hand, but he could find some.

PM

Date Hearing Report completed: April 1, 2025