



M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

June 19, 2007

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State  
18-20 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am hereby returning without my signature House Bill 6715, *An Act Concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana*.

I sincerely appreciate that this bill seeks to provide relief to patients suffering from debilitating medical conditions. The medical profession, as well as public and private biotechnology researchers, have made great strides in both pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic modalities for pain management, and they continue their search to find effective pain-relieving drugs. And yet, for those suffering from unrelenting pain, these scientific advances are hardly sufficient.

I am not unfamiliar with the incredible pain and heartbreak associated with battling cancer. I have struggled with the decision about signing or vetoing this bill. I have spoken and met with dozens of people on this issue, all of whom have presented their positions passionately and articulately. In the end, however, I believe that it is most appropriate for me to veto this bill.

Unquestionably House Bill 6715 attempts to provide an additional option for patients suffering severe and persistent pain. There is no mistaking the fact, however, that it requires that patients or primary caregivers who wish to use or supply marijuana for palliative purposes must first engage in an illegal activity in order to do so. Once a patient receives a written certification for the use of marijuana, where does the patient go? There are no pharmacies, storefronts or mail order catalogs where patients or caregivers can legally purchase marijuana plants or seeds. I am troubled by the fact that, in essence, this bill forces law-abiding citizens to seek out drug dealers to make their marijuana purchases. It puts individuals at risk at a very difficult and vulnerable time in their lives and potentially increases the illegal drug trade.

I would also note that smoked marijuana as medicine has been rejected by the American Medical Association, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Glaucoma Society, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Cancer Society. Our own Connecticut State Medical Society has also rejected the use of smoked marijuana for medicinal purposes.

One can only surmise that this rejection is in large part due to the lack of guidance and standards on the medical use of marijuana and the lack of proof of its effectiveness. Indeed, there are no studies or clinical trials that establish the appropriate quantity to be administered to relieve pain, the optimal frequency and duration of administration, or the most effective method of administration for the medical conditions specified in the bill. Additionally, since the marijuana plants will be grown in unregulated environments, the usable marijuana harvested from different plants may vary dramatically in potency and effectiveness.

There should be no doubt that all of us would want to relieve the pain of a suffering patient. That is why our state in 1981 authorized physicians to prescribe marijuana for medical use. I believe that House Bill 6715, if enacted, may prove to be as ineffective as that equally well-intentioned legislation. Experience has shown that very few, if any, physicians have prescribed marijuana to treat glaucoma and the side effects of chemotherapy since 1981, because doing so would cause them to violate federal law. We cannot predict how many physicians would issue certificates for the use of medical marijuana pursuant to House Bill 6715. I do not want to give false hope to the people this bill intends to benefit, nor do I wish to place them in legal jeopardy by encouraging them to purchase, plant or grow marijuana in violation of federal law.

I am also concerned that this bill would send the wrong message to our youth. I believe that we undermine our own efforts to teach children about the dangers of illegal drugs when we say “. . . except in this case.” While it is imperative that we teach our children to be compassionate, we must also teach them to have respect for the law, and to not excuse illegal acts when we deem them to be justified by the ends to be achieved.

Additionally, there are many important issues not addressed by this bill. For example, there is no provision for monitoring the use of marijuana by qualifying patients and their caregivers to ensure that the drug is used properly and only by qualified patients. Similarly, there is no mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the use of marijuana in relieving pain and other symptoms.

Another complication is the fact that the bill is not limited to terminally ill patients. It may, therefore, significantly impact the relationship between an employer and an employee who is a qualifying patient. If this bill were enacted, would a positive pre-employment test or a drug test given periodically in the course of employment disqualify an individual from employment? What problems may arise if an employee uses marijuana off-site during sanctioned breaks? Or, put another way, would this bill unintentionally provide a defense for employees who abuse marijuana during the work day?

Madam Secretary, for all of the reasons discussed above, I disapprove of H.B. 6715, *An Act Concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana*. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15 of Article Fourth of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and Article III of the Amendments to the Constitution of the State of Connecticut, I am returning House Bill 6715 without my signature. I do so with sincere sympathy and compassion for those who suffer unrelieved pain, but also with great hope and optimism that the medical community will make significant progress in the development of effective drugs and pain management techniques to alleviate their pain in the very near future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. Jodi Rell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

M. Jodi Rell  
Governor