

ATTACHMENT A: COMMITTEE MEETINGS

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, GOVERNMENT, AND LAW

Bullet Point Summary of Oral Testimonies Presented to the Committee
Regarding Senate Bill 20-62, Senate Draft 1

**Thursday, September 28, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. in the Senate Chamber of the
Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan**

1. Ambrose Bennett, Personal Testimony

- Ordinary person trying to perform the extraordinary task of helping you to create the best marijuana bill possible
 - A task that was given to me by the 19th Senate Leadership
 - Not only here to represent the many people who are concerned about this bill, but also to speak on behalf of the Executive Office
 - Met with Governor and Lt. Governor to discuss this bill more than once
 - Tasked with addressing the concerns of both the Executives of the CNMI as the best possible expert on the legalization issue in the CNMI
- Noted the fact that many of the sections in Senate Bill 20-62 were written by him
 - Disagree with some of the sections based on my research on the cannabis industry
 - Hopes to maintain professional working relationship
 - Review the concerns and rationale presented, coming from a qualified individual who is supported by the community, members of the Legislature in the lower House and the Executive offices of the CNMI
- Sent to Colorado by the Senate
 - Tasked to get a genuine reality check on the marijuana industry, challenges and the adverse side effects of the industry
 - Visited government agencies and dispensaries and asking questions
 - Critical society investigation of what was happening in the streets regarding access to marijuana and marijuana products; the black market
- Several discussions with the Execs of the CNMI of some major unforeseen realities about legalization that have not been recognized and addressed appropriately in the proposed bill
 - Provided a litany of 33 bullet points addressing the concerns
 - Requested that the Committee go through the bullet points and discuss these issues for addition prior to any public hearings
 - Redundant to take it to the public when you already have standing concerns coming from members of the community and the Executive Office
- Governor does not want to impose his authority on the Legislature or any Committee, Mr. Bennett would not delineate as to what the Governor's concerns are or differ from those in the community or myself

2. Dr. John Doyle, Personal Testimony

- States have agonized over this and set some pretty good precedence
- Couple realities to help understand how important this is
 - “We have a meth problem on this island, it's huge!”
 - States have meth and they have opioids overrunning the medical system and the jail system
 - This year for the first time, marijuana arrests in the mainland, outnumbered the arrests for robbery, burglary, and rape combined—huge waste of resources
- From a medical point of view
 - Marijuana is available, it is a medication- *Marinol*, also known as *Dronabinol*
 - If you grow in your backyard it is a Schedule 1 narcotic, you'll go to prison
 - But, if you pay the pharmacy company \$1,500 a month, you could have THC which is the active ingredient in marijuana—in pill form—and you can use it as much as you want
 - Becomes hypocritical to make Legislatures, states, and taxpayers pay for lengthy legislation on medication that is already available
 - Drug companies obviously admit marijuana has medicinal properties
 - If there weren't profit there they certainly wouldn't make it
- Main thing that we need to be concerned with in any marijuana legislation is keeping it out of the hands of the children
 - People under 21 years old have got to be prohibited from using it
 - They're not prohibited from using it now; it's on the street, it's unregulated
 - One thing that a marijuana bill will do is eradicate the black market
 - Have responsible dispensaries that will check somebody's I.D.
 - Penalties need to be in place for this
- Segues into another bill as well...
 - If you sell cigarettes to somebody—and we ought to raise that age to 21—under the age of 21 you should be fined heavily, you should lose your privilege to sell cigarettes, and you should do some jail time
- As parents, think about what we would do if somebody was giving our kids cigarettes
 - As the Legislature, you can do that
 - Make the [cigarette] penalties very heavy
 - Same penalty if somebody were to provide marijuana to somebody under the age of 21, should apply, maybe even harder, maybe harder jail time... there's nothing wrong with that approach
 - Approach it the same way we do with alcohol
- The issue
 - Spending all this money on a substance that's already out there
 - A substance that if we were to give a pharmacy company all our money, we could have free access to anyway
 - Government insurance co-pay on that medication= \$80/month
 - Saying it doesn't have medicinal values and medicinal purposes is false
 - Already proven, that's why it's on the market
- States that have legalized marijuana either for recreational use or for medicinal purposes
 - Death rate for opioid overdose has dropped 25-30%...that's not insignificant
 - Down by a third for the number one killer of young adults in the mainland by just legalizing marijuana

- No other confounding factors in the statistics, it's dropped 25-30%
- Meth use dropped even more, 40-50% decreased in areas that have legalized marijuana
- The meth trade drops off
- The legalization of marijuana in California and Colorado and some other states did to the Mexican cartels what all these years the DEA could not do.
 - All these years, all the money that we've spent, now we want to build a huge wall... not necessary because the legalization killed the black market, has killed the cartels, has killed the criminal control with this.
- We didn't learn anything from prohibition (back in the 20s)
 - Didn't learn anything from that because we're still trying to do it with a substance that literally is harmless
- You overdose on marijuana then you eat too much pizza and you go to sleep
- You drink too much, you get arrested, you go to jail
- You do too much meth—your teeth fall out, you lose your family, you lose your house, and you go to jail.
- Appreciate the courage that you all are showing in approaching this bill and I know that you're taking it very, very serious.
 - This persona is a frightening thing, thinking about actually legalizing marijuana
 - Don't let it be frightening because it's already out there and your minds and hearts are being manipulated by drug companies
 - Minds and hearts are being manipulated by outdated drug policies
- Thank you for being out on the forefront, especially here and were still on the forefront, it's still early.
- Thank you for having the courage to take this issue on
- If I can be of any assistance and offer any medical information for you, or medical advice, or if I can answer any medical questions, please feel free to call me

Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at 3:30 p.m. in the Senate Chamber of the Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan

1. Marissa Flores Ada:

- Who can cultivate cannabis in the CNMI?
 - CNMI is an agricultural state; indigenous farmers are almost wiped out
 - Recommended that land used to grow cannabis not be leased to foreign farmers
 - “If you are going to grow outside hydroponics and use the local land to cultivate such then the land should not be leased to anybody. You must own the land, you must be indigenous, and you cannot... you can grow (x) amount depending on what it is you have.”
- Hundreds of abandoned buildings not owned by local people, leased to foreign investors
 - Local people don't have the spending power
 - Open up a [cannabis] industry that will not be controlled by our people
- No protection to the indigenous people; Please protect the local farmers
 - Maybe we need to find out how many of these lands are leased to non-residents
 - It is free enterprise, yes... BUT it is not free if you don't own the land
 - Bring the spending power back to the people; due time for farmers to get back in the business
- If you're going to cultivate, be it hydroponics or traditional farming it needs to be addressed as to who can do that.
- Who will be distributors? Who will be buyers? How are we going to identify them??... We're going to license that? How?

2. Carolyn Peter Hosono:

- Didn't read the bill thoroughly but offered full support for its passage
- Dad fought for decades to make marijuana legal
 - Diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer
 - Luckily, had a son living in one of the legal states (WA)
 - Survived almost 1 year on hemp oil
 - Insurance doesn't cover it- dispensary provided it for free
 - Had no pain, no signs of sickness
 - Came back to Saipan for 2 reasons:
 - He felt guilty availing it and living while friends and family were dying here.
 - He missed his family.
- Whoever has the luxury she encourages them to move... It's not a luxury that we should be wishing on our people anymore when everyone is doing it
- Asked Public Health about cancer rate in the CNMI
 - Rumor that CNMI ranks highest worldwide
- Helps with other ailments but also helped to keep her dad alive
- While deliberating and looking at all the regulations look what's been done already; don't try to reinvent the wheel
- In the essence of time and patients in need, take the input from the experts and advice of the people who know the answers
- Please look into insurance coverage for those who don't want to grow

3. Dr. John Doyle

- One thing mentioned to him was that some school teachers and youth groups may be against it
 - Physiological reason: “In a young person, the brain is still developing up until about that age (21). It doesn’t really stop forming and when you throw alcohol in there in the mix, if you throw methamphetamine, if you throw in marijuana, I mean anything it does cause a remodeling of the brain. Depends on how you want to look at that, but that’s some type of brain damage. But for people over 21 and again it’s not an arbitrary number. This is what we’ve looked at through CT scans, MRIs, PET scans, and psychological testing over the years, people over 21 it doesn’t bother. It is completely harmless.”
 - When this process was undergoing in states, people there stated that the children will get into it
 - Result was completely opposite
 - Marijuana use among youth has gone down in states that are legal= got rid of the black market
 - When it is regulated and official price cheaper than what they [black market] can sell it for, people will go to the outlets where it is licensed, where it is safe, where it’s legal
- Federal position on marijuana is hypocritical
 - Marijuana is Schedule 1 which means that it has no medicinal value, the only value is a drug of abuse
 - But \$1800 buys you Dronabinol and Marinol from the pharmacy, which is pure THC that is purer than what you can get out of the plant so obviously has medicinal value or else they wouldn’t make it, sell it, or FDA wouldn’t approve it
 - Thorn in the side of many states
- Focus on keeping it out of the hands of those below 21

Based on questions asked, main responses are as follows:

- Has not seen any evidence that marijuana cures cancer;
 - Anecdotal stories from patients that used cannabis oil and solved their cancer;
 - But allows people with chronic conditions to use cannabis instead of highly addicted prescribed medication;
 - Calming effect vs. serious side effects from prescribed medication;
 - Used to alleviate symptoms
- If physicians prescribe any form of cannabis they are technically still violation of federal law;
 - States have carved out exceptions so that physicians can do it;
 - Has DEA license and if he prescribes a substance that isn’t FDA approved he could risk losing his DEA license on the other hand, he can prescribe the same thing as a pill and its perfectly legal
 - Hopeful that insurance companies will cover it
- Physician shouldn’t be directly involved in the business of cannabis- conflict of interest is too great
 - Ethically not advisable, family members would refer to American Association Code of Ethics
- Attorneys in states that have legalized it have not had any problems
 - Attorneys shouldn’t be growing and selling

- Attorneys should have professional distance; common sense
- Actual and official approval of THC is wasting syndrome
 - For people who cannot eat; can't hold food down
 - Called an anti-medic
 - Appetite stimulant for people with wasting syndrome
 - Not a direct cure but alleviate harsh syndrome in lower doses that allows patient to interact with their family
- Cannabinoids are chemicals derived from THC from the marijuana plant- different oils, some have no hallucinogenic properties; some of them there's no high; they serve a direct purpose
 - "Those are the ones you read about children having epilepsy, it's been stopped by using these cannabis oils. It's not pure THC. Child is not getting stone; the child is actually treating their seizure disorder with a product that is directly derived from THC."
- Cannabinoids not available in U.S. because its categorized as Schedule 1
- Other countries opened up and had it legal for a long time
- Original banning had more to do with economics
 - Large companies would have been destroyed
 - Part of Jim Crow laws—another tool against African American community

4. Dr. Daniel Lamar, Kagman Community Health Center

- Protecting the right of the people to use it easily
- Marijuana has a lot of baggage, both good and bad; Imagine it as a food, spice, plant
- Why come to me for a prescription for something that can grow in your backyard?
- Why are we regulating it?... that's the extreme
 - You're asking for the household user to get a license to grow marijuana; charging them \$100 annual fee
 - Most patients cannot afford \$5 medication over the counter but ask for prescription for insurance to cover it
 - Paying for the privilege to grow something in their backyard, that's a hardship
 - Pay \$100 for medical license; pay every \$200 every 2 years
 - You're going to ask someone who has no income to pay \$100 year... why? Do you need that money? Get it from the growers, the commercial people, NOT the people who need it. Do away with that.- How much does it cost to get a driver's license? Rethink that
- Federal laws
 - Bill mentions "recommend" not prescribe
 - When you prescribe something you interfere with federal laws but if you recommend something then those no interference with federal law
- Farming
 - All this money around marijuana and growing it then why do people grow food, we can just import everything
 - Going to lose local farmers
 - You're going to grow resentment of how people grow food
 - Placing marijuana on a pedestal and making other food less valuable
 - Funnel money to protect the farmers who grow our food

5. Anthony Calvo

- Economic Benefit
 - Legal states initial projection exceeded 3-4x
 - Tourism is our only industry right now
 - Legalize, regulate, tax, and target tourism industry
 - Creates more jobs
 - Recreational limit 3 plants- compel them to buy it= generate revenue
 - For every economic gain there's a social sacrifice
 - Prostitution legal in Nevada= economic growth
 - Recognize it and tax it for social and economic benefit
 - Makes the activity safer for people engaged in the business
- Personal Benefit
 - Prescribed medication to treat boil
 - Caused severe abdominal pain; constipation
 - Decided to try marijuana & had no side effects
- Social Benefit
 - Every week we read about people being busted for ice
 - Hear testimonies that marijuana will reduce the use of meth
 - Chief prosecutor came in to rid the island of marijuana at a time when ice was coming in, so people turned to ice

6. Bernard Sablan Guerrero

- Witnessing the issues surrounding the legalization of marijuana- the CNMI is behind in legalizing marijuana and we need to capitalize it
- Supporting the bill- not perfect but it's a starting point
- Give it to the people to decide

7. Ted Deleon Guerrero

- Flew in from Guam to show support for the bill
- Guam passed medicinal and still having problems to set it up properly- took 3 years
 - Just to get dispensary license was \$100K and later reduced to \$35K
 - Governor wanted to include recreational but people still trying to educate themselves
- Commend CNMI because it will benefit a lot of people
- Matter of time for it to be legal on a federal level
- Localized local, illegal under federal
- Bank of Saipan is the only bank not under FDIC- invest in it
- Let the people decide
- Recommended exemption of \$100 license or lower for those in low income bracket

8. Ambrose Bennett:

- Most of the people still haven't seen the bill; need public forum rather than hearing
- It shouldn't be an initiative; time is not our friend
 - Talking 3 years before it becomes a reality
 - Take 1 year to develop the strains needed for the dispensaries
 - Another year to actually get business started
- Urge communication with members of the House and Governor's office to get their sentiments
- Instead of license- simple permit just to grow
 - Permit to ensure place being grown is not located to the school
 - Shouldn't be expensive; Medical patients shouldn't have to pay
- Farmers
 - Not detailed enough to explain nuances
 - Understand all aspects of who is going to do what and how they're going to do it
- Commission is a governing board not an administration
 - Bill proposes to makes policies and run administration
 - Money has to be segregated- need separate entity
 - Bill proposes under Commerce which is not a problem, problem is that it needs to be an entity in itself, self-contained to make sure none of the funding and controls are mixed with federal and local funding/controls
 - Bill proposes Commission working part-time after a certain amount of time... this is an industry. Need a full time department to control and enforce it
 - Replace enforcement under DPS- DPS is already swamped, why burden them with something we're trying to make legal
 - People needed to be educated
 - One reason by former president to get him involved was to educate the people before it becomes law and make necessary changes