

## ATTACHMENT C: ORAL TESTIMONIES

# SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, GOVERNMENT, AND LAW

Written statements provided regarding Senate Bill 20-62, Senate Draft 1

<b>No.</b>	<b>Witness Testified</b>	<b>Reference Number</b>
1.	Reuben Chong, Lead Clinician, SAR Program	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-101717-1
2.	Gary Sword, Personal Testimony	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-101717-2)
3.	Vivian Sablan, Division of Youth Services Administrator	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102317-1
4.	Laura Sablan Muna, Personal Testimony	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102317-2
5.	Father Kenneth Hezel, Pastor of Kristo Rai Church	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102317-3
6.	Dr. Helen Taro-Atalig, MD, Personal Testimony	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102317-4
7.	Honorable Joey P. San Nicolas, Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-1
8.	Honorable Antonio Sn. Borja, Chairman of the 16 <sup>th</sup> Tinian Municipal Council	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-2
9.	Guillermo C. Borja, Personal Testimony	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-3
10.	Kimberly Hinds, Personal Testimony	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-4
11.	Marjorie Daria, Resident Director of Tinian Health Center	JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-5

1. I'D LIKE TO RESPECTFULLY AND HONORABLY THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE SAR PROGRAM
2. MY BOSS, YVETTE SABLAN, WOULD LIKE TO SEND HER BEST WISHES TO EVERYONE ON THE COMMITTEE, BUT DUE EMERGENT ISSUES AT HOME SHE WAS NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT,
3. I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE PRIVILEGE AND HONOR TO SPEAK ON HER BEHALF AND PRAY THAT I DO HER JUSTICE. MY NAME IS REUEN CHONG, LCSW, MAC, CSAC, ICADC/LEAD CLINICIAN AT THE GOVERNOR'S SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAM KNOW TO SOME OF YOU AS SAR!

ARE TALKING ABOUT LEGALIZING MEDICAL MARIJUANA—AMONG OTHER THINGS—OR ARE WE SPEAKING ABOUT HARM REDUCTION AND MEDICATION ASSISTED THERAPY

Neuropathic pain affects between 5% and 10% of the US population and can be refractory to treatment. I've added the words Opioids and prescription medications in this brief because whether you see it now or not, you will see it become a problem the future on the new CNMI. If we are honest with ourselves, we are on the tipping scale of losing the battle with crystal methamphetamines as a growing epidemic. Shortly .... And soon, a bigger monster than crystal methamphetamine will be looming in the background which may very well turn into a pandemic: The Opioid Crisis. The misuse of prescription medications. The primary offenders will be us—the up and coming baby boomers (At least I hope I'm one).

Medicine relies upon the principle of, "First, do no harm," and one might supplement the axiom to read - "First, do no harm, and second, **reduce all the harm you can.**" "Harm reduction" or "harm minimization" can be defined in the broadest sense as strategies designed to reduce risk or harm. Those harmed may include the individual, others impacted by the harmed person (families), and society as a whole. **The substitution of a safer drug for one that is more dangerous is considered harm reduction.** Specific examples of Harm Reduction or Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) include prescribing methadone or buprenorphine to replace heroin; prescribing nicotine patches to be used instead of smoking tobacco; and prescribing intranasal naloxone to patients on opioid therapy to be utilized in case of overdose. These are all considered Harm Reduction or more succinctly, MAT--interventions. Substituting cannabis for prescribed opioids may be considered a harm reduction strategy tethered to MAT.

Lastly, I'd like to leave you with a few thoughts to ponder:

"Medical marijuana shows considerable promise in reducing chronic pain from a widespread number of causes, including cancer, spinal cord injury and disease, severe spasms, post-traumatic stress disorder, nausea, glaucoma, Parkinson's and other debilitating ailments. The drug could prove useful in other applications if patients are allowed to use it.

It is nonsensical to oppose the use of medical marijuana in the midst of what amounts to a nationwide epidemic of opioid addiction. Why not provide patients with a safer option? And why continue to allow doctors to prescribe powerful, addictive opiates but deny them the authority to legally prescribe medical marijuana?

It is illogical and potentially heartless to deny patients with serious health problems a drug that could help mediate pain and discomfort with few, if any, side effects."

Jan. 24, 2017 - [Herald Editorial Board](#)

Sanjay Gupta, MD, Chief Medical Correspondent for CNN, wrote the following in an Aug. 8, 2013 article titled "Why I Changed My Mind on Weed," published on CNN.com: *I had steadily reviewed the scientific literature on medical marijuana from the United States and thought it was fairly unimpressive. Reading these papers five years ago, it was hard to make a case for medicinal marijuana. I even wrote about this in a TIME magazine article, back in 2009, titled 'Why I would Vote No on Pot.'*

Well, I am here to apologize.

I apologize because I didn't look hard enough, until now. I didn't look far enough. I didn't review papers from smaller labs in other countries doing some remarkable research, and I was too dismissive of the loud chorus of legitimate patients whose symptoms improved on cannabis...

I mistakenly believed the Drug Enforcement Agency listed marijuana as a schedule 1 substance because of sound scientific proof. Surely, they must have quality reasoning as to why marijuana is in the category of the most dangerous drugs that have 'no accepted medicinal use and a high potential for abuse.'

They didn't have the science to support that claim, and I now know that when it comes to marijuana neither of those things are true. It doesn't have a high potential for abuse, and there are very legitimate medical applications. In fact, sometimes marijuana is the only thing that works...

We have been terribly and systematically misled for nearly 70 years in the United States, and I apologize for my own role in that."

**Editor's Note:** Prior to Dr. Gupta's **pro** statement on Aug. 8, 2013, he expressed a **con** position as indicated in his Nov. 6, 2006 statement in the opposite column.]

Joycelyn Elders, MD, former US Surgeon General, wrote the following in a Mar. 26, 2004 article titled "Myths About Medical Marijuana," published in the *Providence Journal*:

"The evidence is overwhelming that marijuana can relieve certain types of pain, nausea, vomiting and other symptoms caused by such illnesses as multiple sclerosis, cancer and AIDS -- or by the harsh drugs sometimes used to treat them. And it can do so with remarkable safety. Indeed, marijuana is less toxic than many of the drugs that physicians prescribe every day."

Mar. 26, 2004 - [Joycelyn Elders, MD](#)

Small island communities face great economic risk every day from changes in the global economy which are controlled by developed nations and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is no exception. Our island communities have been used for nuclear testing, bombing of our lands, introduced invasive species and brought in foreign practices which have poisoned our water tables, crippled our lands, destroyed our medicinal plants and damaged our ocean resources.

IN the CNMI, we gave support to Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States of America all of them promising to take care of the people. In the end, each one had a plan that DID NOT include any economic benefits for the indigenous people of the CNMI.

The US promised a military base to help the people of Tinian and we gave them 2/3 of an island this has not happened. We were promised support to be financially self-sufficient and they took away our immigration. Our oceans were taken away and we only got back a little 2 years ago. They tried to bully into Pagan and Tinian. To put it bluntly we have been bullied to accept whatever they shove down our throats.

This bullying from a large nation essentially results from the combined adverse consequences of our small size, remoteness, and high economic vulnerability to economic and natural shocks that are beyond our control but fully within theirs. We are disadvantaged by major changes in technology, international economic conditions, communications and legislation that disregards the needs and aspirations of small island communities.

Another big challenge is Climate change which is expected to result in a variety of environmental, social, and economic effects on island communities, including threats to natural habitat, loss of habitable and agricultural land, coastal erosion, increased intensity and frequency of tropical storms, decreased food and water security, and adverse impacts on human health with particular acuity in small island economies.

It is time we wake up and understand we need to be brave, be bold and **take control of our FUTURE**

I AM HERE TO SUPPORT the Marijuana Initiative because Marijuana Legalization is an economic development initiative and is

Marijuana has grown by **veritable leaps and bounds** since it was first approved by Proposition 215 in California all the way back in 1996. Today we can count 23 states as having legalized the drug for medical purposes and 16 for recreational purposes. The result, at least for some recreation-legal states, has been explosive growth.

Following an economic impact totaling \$6.4 billion in 2013, a range of \$8 billion to \$9.6 billion in 2014, and \$12 billion to \$13.6 billion in 2015, Factbook estimates an economic impact of \$14 billion to \$17.2 billion in 2016. Comparing 2015's and 2016's estimates at the midpoint, we're looking at growth of 22%.

But, the industry isn't stopping there. Factbook estimates that the total impact of the marijuana industry could soar to a range of \$24.4 billion on the low end to \$44 billion on the high end by 2020.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The more telling statistic is that for each dollar spent on leisure vacation promotion in 2015, \$490 was generated. "This tax revenue is very important to them. It's three times as much as alcohol tax and it has quickly become entrenched in the budget,"

MBD assigned marijuana an economic multiplier of four, meaning for every dollar spent on weed, three more dollars are also added to the economy.

JGL RECEIVED 101717-LA. JDT  
Ref. No. JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-101717-2

## TOURISM

The tourism industry could benefit in a big way from the emergence of marijuana. Colorado Tourism Office showed that nearly **half of all people** who recently visited Colorado were influenced in some way by recreational marijuana. A *Denver Post* report from mid-2014 showed that out-of-state visitors accounted for about **half of all recreational marijuana sales** in the Denver area, and were responsible for almost **90% of recreational marijuana** sales in mountain resort communities.

## HEALTH

People taking about health One selling point of Washington's new legal marijuana law was that a huge chunk of pot-related tax revenue would be devoted to health coverage for low-income residents.

## EDUCATION

OREGON 40 percent for education. 20 percent Mental Health Alcoholism and Drug Services / 15 percent for state law enforcement.

Colorado 51% goes to schools. Colorado continues to put cannabis taxes to good use, as funds are currently being used to build **safe housing for homeless people with mental health issues**, addictions, survivors of domestic violence and the disabled.

## HOUSING

Colorado was able to put \$16 million towards Affordable Housing Grants and Loans in 2016 from cannabis tax collections.

**JOBS 12 MIL TOURIST VISIT COLORADO** Legal weed created 18,005 full-time jobs and added about \$2.4 billion to the state's economy last year **NEVADA 30MIL TOURISTS PER YEAR**. Over the first seven years, the report found, Nevada would see a \$7.5 billion bump to its total economic output and gain about 41,000 jobs.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COSTS:** According to Uniform Crime Reporting data for Denver, there has been a 10.1% decrease in overall crime from this time last year and a 5.2% drop in violent crime. "[T]he legalization of medical marijuana is associated with a **13.2 percent decrease in fatalities**. They found that medical marijuana laws have correlated with a 12.5 percent decrease in violent crime homicides, aggravated assaults, and robberies in states that border Mexico.

**PRISONS:** cOLORADO is estimated to potentially save \$12-40 million over the span of a year simply by ending arrests for marijuana possession.

Washington and Colorado legalized marijuana in 2012. Oregon and Alaska followed in 2014. In 2016, Massachusetts, Maine, California and Nevada joined the movement. Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Vermont, New Mexico, Michigan, Rhode Island and Maryland are poised to legalize marijuana in 2018

"Now is the time to join other states and move toward a sensible system of regulation and taxation,"

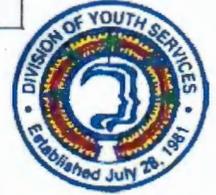
The tax-and-regulate legalization for adult recreational use is where the real money is.

Legalizing marijuana will have the same effect as the Casino bill and generate about the same amount of money if we develop it in a sensible sustainable and indigenous manner **THE WAY FORWARD TO SELF-RELIANCE AD CHANCE TO CHART AND BUILD OUR OWN FUTURE.**



## DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS



### OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Chalan Piao Plaza, P.O. Box 501000 C.K., Saipan, MP 96950

October 20, 2017

Senator Steve K. Mesngon  
Chairman, Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law  
20<sup>th</sup> CNMI Legislature  
Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building  
Capitol Hill, Saipan

Reference: Senate Bill 20-62, Senate Draft 1: *To regulate Cannabis in the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes.*

Dear Chairman Mesngon:

This is to submit a written testimony in reference to Senate Bill 20-62. As the Administrator for the DCCA-Division of Youth Services (DYS), I provide overall supervision for the daily operations of the DYS Units/Programs inclusive of Rota and Tinian, which has numerous responsibilities that promote the well-being of children, youth and the community as a whole.

The DYS intervenes on reports of all forms of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence where children are involved, truancy, runaway/homeless youth, juvenile delinquency and provide rehabilitative services to youth remanded for secured care (Juvenile Detention). The DYS Crisis Intervention Units include the Child Protective Services and Juvenile Probation Unit while the Prevention areas consist of the Family and Youth Enhancement Program, which is divided into three (3) sections: Youth Services; Parent Education Services and Community Services (see unit/program functions).

The DCCA-DYS commits a great amount of its resources annually to ensure that it carries through with service plans to ultimately meet the goal of family reunification when it comes to child abuse and/or neglect. Additional resources are also invested towards stabilization and rehabilitation of both juveniles detained and those juveniles placed under probation.

For FY 2017, preliminary data showed that the Child Protective Services provided direct services to 309 children and 79 adults for one-hundred ninety-one (191) child abuse and neglect cases. Fourteen (14) out of these cases involved drugs, which led to DYS' custody of nine (9) ICE babies. The Juvenile Probation Unit provided direct services to

two-hundred thirty (230) juveniles. Of this, thirty-one (31) juveniles were arrested for illegal possession of a controlled substance.

The following provides for some support and concern areas on Senate Bill 20-62:

DCCA-DYS will provide support to regulate Cannabis in the CNMI for medicinal purposes provided that the legalization will come with strict regulations. The intended benefits to the welfare of our CNMI residents will only come when there is “control.” Although we don’t want to be misconstrued for supporting drug use, we will support for therapeutic use strictly for those adults suffering from certain medical conditions.

On the other hand, there are critical concern areas that must be considered when it comes to legalizing cannabis for personal use. Cannabis legalization for recreational/personal use can lead to “abuse” and may create many other familial and community issues. The draft states that “allowing for adult use of marijuana will contribute to the decrease in youth access to marijuana and usage rates among the youth.” DYS stands to disagree. The legalization will make marijuana easily accessible to adults and most especially the youth, which may play a role in contributing to other parenting issues and juvenile delinquency.

Legalizing cannabis may lead to dependency/addiction and the use of other more serious illegal drugs. The long term use and abuse will affect families and they ultimately suffer lifelong consequences. We continue to battle the ill effects of drugs and its associated problems in the CNMI. If we are talking about “public health, safety and quality of life” for all residents....then we should continue work to prevent the existing problems.

With this, we would also like to share the following areas that may require additional discussions:

1. A juvenile caught for possession of alcohol and/or cigarette will be considered a “Status Offense.” Status Offense is an offense that if otherwise caught on an adult, it wouldn’t be considered an offense (cigarette-18yrs and alcohol-21 yrs). If cannabis is legalized and a juvenile is caught with possession, will it be considered a “status offense?”
2. “Drunk Driving” is illegal. Will “Driving High” while under the influence of Marijuana be considered illegal?
3. Section 129: Child Custody Protections...What if the use and abuse of marijuana is contributing to the abuse and/or neglect of the child (ren)?
4. Section 130: Smoking Marijuana in Presence of Minors Prohibited... How will this be regulated? It doesn’t really serve as a guaranteed controlled environment.

5. A major concern will be on Section 128 on Employment Protections... Because DYS' highly sensitive positions, impairment/alter in perceptions/lapses in judgements caused by marijuana use while on the job will create liability issues. DYS Caseworkers assess for safety and make decisions that serve the best interest of minors. If legalized, impairment due to marijuana use will be a critical concern, therefore the company policy in this regards will become very critical.

A priority must be made to safeguard the well-being of our youth and families. Public safety must not be compromised, therefore, there still is a need for a comprehensive study to determine the social impacts of the proposed legislation.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to solicit DYS' input.

Respectfully,

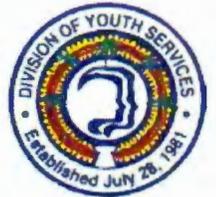


Vivian T. Sablan  
DYS Administrator



# DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS



## OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Building # 1263, P.O. Box 501000 C.K., Saipan, MP 96950

*Received 10/24/17*  
*PA*

The Division of Youth Services has numerous responsibilities that promote the well-being of children, youth, families and the community as a whole. The division intervenes on reports of all forms of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence where children are involved, truancy, runaway/homeless youth, juvenile delinquency and provide rehabilitative services to youth remanded for secured care.

### DYS UNIT/PROGRAM FUNCTIONS

#### CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

- Respond to Child Abuse and Neglect Reports
- Emergency Shelter Services
- Foster Care Services
- Case Management Services
- Client Monitoring/Home Assessments
- Court Hearings
- Coordinate Family Support Services
- Prevention/Outreach

#### JUVENILE PROBATION UNIT

- Supervision of Court Conditions for Juveniles
- Client Monitoring
- Case Management
- Court Hearings
- Services for Juveniles Detained

#### FAMILY & YOUTH ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

##### I. YOUTH SERVICES:

- Coordination of Counseling Services
- Rehabilitative Programs for Juveniles Detained
- Anger Management Sessions
- Substance Abuse Prevention Sessions
- Botvin Lifeskills Sessions

- Juvenile Reentry Sessions
- Afterschool Program
- Prevention/Outreach

## **II. PARENT EDUCATION SERVICES:**

- Parenting Classes
- Parents Anonymous, Inc. Support Groups
- Parent Development Workshops
- 24-Hour Parent Helpline
- Prevention/Outreach

## **III. COMMUNITY SERVICES:**

- Education, Training and Employment for Low-Income
- Community Action Agencies/Program Monitoring
- Volunteer Program
- Unit/Program Referrals
- Data Management System
- Performance Measurement

## 'COMMENTS'

"Cannabis Act S.B. 20-62 SD1"

Public Hearing, October 23, 2017 Multi-Purpose Center, Susupe

Good evening Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Laura Sablan Muna, I am a private citizen and I am from the village of Koblerville.

I am here tonight in support of "Cannabis Act" S.B. 20-62 SD1.

Let me share with you my experience with my daughter. Her name is Yvonne Sablan Reyes, known as Bonnie Kapira. My daughter had a history of "Cerebral Pulsy" and "Epilepsy". She had these chronic illnesses since she was two years old, and now she's 43. She's taking five (5) medication pills at 850mg., twice daily for a total of 1,700mg for life. She gets her attack practically every day and night, even with or without her medication.

So for this reason, I decided to move with her to U.S. Mainland to seek further medical treatment. She was seen by a Neuro.Surgeon and he performed MRI and CT Scan tests, and came to find out that my daughter had cysts in her brain that is why she's having minor and major seizures. The Doctor said that he could perform the surgery, but it's going to be 50-50 or 100% chances of survival, so I decided not to go with the operation. It was a very hard decision for me to accept, for that I was a single parent at the time and I did not want to see my daughter suffer more and it's bad enough what she is going through in her life and it's been a big challenge for me.

I am hoping and praying for a miracle to come so that will eliminate or ease her pain and sufferings she's encountering for many, many years. This miracle that I am talking about is the miracle plant called "Cannabis or Marijuana."

So I ask that you kindly support this bill for the betterment of those people who are sufferings from different chronic illnesses.

Despite my daughter's sicknesses, she was loved by many people and she has this loving and caring attitude for others.

THANK YOU YAN SI YU'US MAASE.



Prepared and Submitted by: Laura Sablan Muna

Re: CNMI cannabis Act of 2018

I am opposed to the above act for the following reasons:

1. Scientific and medical research appears to be divided regarding the effects of using marijuana as a recreational drug. Do we have sufficient information at this time to make a good decision for the community now?

See for example the attached Article from Scientific American Oct 20 2017

“Link between Adolescent Pot Smoking and Psychosis Strengthens

Research presented at a Berlin psychiatric conference shows teenage cannabis use hastens onset of schizophrenia in vulnerable individuals”

2, St Paul reminds us in his letter 2 thessalonians

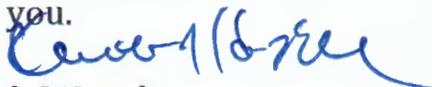
“Do not let anyone have any food if he refuses to do any work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living in idleness, doing no work but interfering with everyone else’s”.

It is very important that as young people grow they learn a skill by which they can support themselves and contribute to the community over the long haul.

How will the use of marijuana, on a regular basis, affect a young persons ability to acquire a marketable skill so as to support his family and community.

My observation while living in various pacific island is that a continued use of cannabis diminishes ones ability to make healthy choices and can impair one’s ability to be a contributing member to the community. This is anecdotal not scientific information.

Thank you.



Kenneth J Hezel  
Pastor: Kristo Rai Church  
Oct 23 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

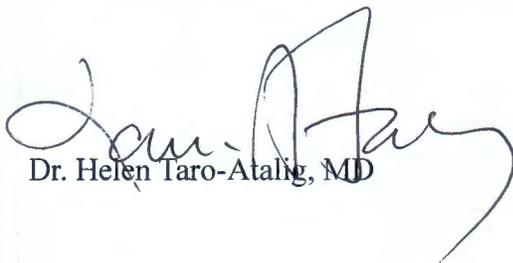
My name is Dr. Helen Taro-Atalig, and I would like to express my agreement with the legalization of marijuana in the CNMI. I believe it would be a big help in the medical field and a bigger step forward within the community. Medically, the use of marijuana would be extremely helpful to those with chronic pain and other illnesses. Recreational legalization would also make it easier to access for those who cannot wait for the medicinal regulations.

If we could use marijuana as a medication for patients with chronic pain, it would have a better effect than other medications such as: morphine, demerol, and oxycodone. The patients would have a lesser chance of getting a drug addiction. I prescribed marijuana to an old patient of mine and he never requested for pain medicine again. He used the plant to help relieve the discomfort until he passed away. It helped him and it can help others.

Another patient with epilepsy that I've encountered could benefit from the use of marijuana. She is 21, five months pregnant and has to take twice as many medications to keep herself and her baby healthy. She personally would not like to smoke the plant but sees no problem with infusing it with her food. Marijuana could help reduce the risks she faces as well as anyone else with similar issues.

Marijuana for medicinal and recreational use would be good for the CNMI. I would like to see my patient's health improve and stay well. To see a change in the healthcare facilities where patients do not come in asking for more pain medicine or a higher dose because it is not strong enough. Medicinal use would help stray away the anxiety and help these patients relax and I would like to see that happen.

Thank you,



Dr. Helen Taro-Atalig, MD

**Mayor's Remarks: SB 20-62**

Good afternoon, Buenas Tatdes and Tiroow Ami. I would like to thank everyone here for their presence at today's public hearing, especially [*dignitaries, resident department heads, community members*]. I also extend a warm welcome to the honorable members of the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law to the beautiful island of Tinian; and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer my comments on Senate Bill 20-62.

As of today, the sale and possession of cannabis is legal in eight (8) states; personal use decriminalized in the District of Columbia; and medical use of marijuana legal in twenty-three more (23) states. In 2018, up to ten (10) other states will take to the ballot and vote for the right to produce, consume, and sell cannabis; and I believe that the Northern Mariana Islands should follow suit.

Many in the Commonwealth still have valid reservations about cannabis. However, the benefits that follow the legalization of marijuana are well-known: Patients with chronic illnesses can now use cannabis instead of painkillers, and drug overdoses are in decline. Government resources previously dedicated to marijuana-related arrests are now being diverted towards the fight against other, more destructive substances such as methamphetamine. Consumption is now closely

regulated by state governments. And tax revenues from legalized cannabis in the U.S. have topped \$1 billion.

Our islands are currently reaping the benefits of our most recent economic upswing; however, it is important that we as a people find ways to diversify our economy to keep it afloat in the long-run. Senate Bill 20-62 offers our people an opportunity to do just that. By allowing the sale, possession and consumption of cannabis, we can enhance our economy's current momentum by offering tourists a new recreational activity unavailable to them in their home countries, right here in the CNMI. Further, we can bolster our base economy by opening a new, legal market cannabis for our locals to avail of. Given that almost 25% of CNMI adults consume cannabis, this potential increase in economic activity could prove sustainable, independent of our tourism industry.

The island of Tinian in particular faces significant struggles in establishing a stable long-term economy. For this reason, I ask that the honorable members of our legislature to retain the clauses in SB 20-62 that allow for local control of cannabis regulation; it is important that each island, with its own unique economic climate, decides how the market for cannabis can be tailored to our specific needs. In addition, I ask that each island is allowed to legalize cannabis with respect to their

own Senatorial Districts, so that the people of Tinian (and Rota) can decide how - and when - such a law may be implemented.

In closing, I am happy to support the passage of Senate Bill 20-62, to allow our people to decide on the legalization of cannabis. I thank you, Senator Igisiomar, for introducing this important piece of legislation, and I thank our panel for listening to our feedback. I look forward to hearing more discussion from our panel members and the public on this matter. Thank you and *Un Dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase*.



ANTONIO SN BORJA  
CHAIRMAN

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
**SIXTEENTH TINIAN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL**

Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan  
San Jose Village, Tinian MP 96952 CNMI USA  
Tel. (670) 433-3470 Email:tiqmunipalouncil@gmail.com

EDWIN M HOFSCHEIDER  
VICE CHAIRMAN



PHILLIP MENDILA-LONG  
SECRETARY/TREASURER

October 27, 2017

JGL received  
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Senator Steve K. Mesngon  
20<sup>th</sup> NMC Legislature  
Chairman  
Judiciary, Government & Law  
Saipan MP 96950

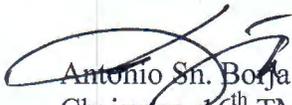
RE: Comments on S.B. No. 20-62

Hafa Adai Chairman Mesngon,

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the opportunity to comment on the Senate Bill No. 20-62 *"To regulate Cannabis in the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes"*.

I am in full support of this Senate Bill No. 20-62 for economic growth and medicinal purposes. Economically, the CNMI will benefit in additional tax revenue and sales tax from medical marijuana businesses. For medicinal purposes, some states use marijuana to treat illnesses such as; PTSD, Cancer, and Epilepsy. Marijuana is also used to ease pain, reduces inflammation, and promotes sleep, which may help relieve pain and discomfort for people with rheumatoid arthritis, and other conditions, which I believe is a safe medical alternative and beneficial to our community. Also, other reasons in supporting this bill are all stated in section 1, Findings and Purpose.

Again thank you and Si Yu'us Ma'ase.

  
Antonio Sn. Borja  
Chairman, 16<sup>th</sup> TMC

CC: File



20-62-SD-1

October 25, 2017

JGL RECEIVED 102717-LA. JDT  
Ref. No. JGL-PH-SB2062SD1-OT-102717-3

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of this committee. My name is Guillermo C. Borja, a resident of this beautiful island of Tinian.

Mr. Chairman, I have worked many years as a law enforcement, including with the Federal in California, Hawaii, and finally in Washington State. During those years, I had witnessed plenty of accidents to include deaths and paralysis due to alcohol consumption. None, did I ever come across a person involving in an accident because of marijuana use. Alcohol and other drugs kills innocent people. How many of us here and in Guam read about traffic fatalities on the news involving marijuana? Mr. Chairman, most of those deaths attributed to the consumption of a legal drug which is alcohol. I am not advocating for this bill for my personal gain, because I do not use it. However, I am supporting it because of the pain and sufferings that our veterans and those that are terminally ill. Veterans sometimes take their own lives because of the pain they had suffered fighting for our freedoms and that if we allow this bill to pass, it will alleviate their sufferings. I am sure you all heard about people being succumbed by cancer and that if marijuana was legalized, marijuana will prolong their lives and ease their pains. Anyways, I am in full support of Senate Bill 20-62 SD1 and that I hope we will finally be able to pass it through initiative next November. The economy and ending of the pain and sufferings are the reasons for my support.

Thank you.

  
Guillermo C. Borja  
Tinian Resident

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2. Follow Bill Thru it  
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Good



For the record, my name is Kim Hinds. I am stand before you in my personal capacity as a private citizen and as a member of the Tinian community.

First, let me say Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 20-62, otherwise known as the CNMI Cannabis Act. I am here today to express my full support of the intent of this bill which is to decriminalize, legalize and regulate the use of recreational marijuana in the Commonwealth. **The recent gallop poll across the nation shows that 60% of America now favors full legalization of Marijuana to include not just medical but recreational use. A recent report by the Wyatt Investment Research which tracts the movement of legalization across the country predicts that every single state in the nation will have decriminalized the use of marijuana by 2020.**

So what that means is that we are not talking about getting into an unchartered territory but actually joining in on the revolution to end the prohibition of cannabus.

I am not a medical expert so I will not stand here and give you an expert opinion on the health benefits of marijuana. What I can say is that I have too many friends and family members who are hooked on opioids to give them relief because it is legal. Experts say the US is in the throes of an opioid epidemic as more than two million American have become dependent on or abused prescription pain pills – I'm talking about hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and codeine- all legal that people are literally dying from because their addictions. **Statistics show that Opioids are the main driver of drug overdose deaths.** I would argue, as many others have, that this crisis is a direct result of prohibition of marijuana and the fact is, to theoretically overdose from marijuana, you would have to smoke 1,500 pounds to die from it. The research says that there is a direct correlation between the legalization of marijuana and the decrease in opioid abuse. The science, research and statistics supports the intent of this bill.



I do not work in law enforcement but I am a private attorney and my husband is the attorney general who is in charge of drug offenses in the commonwealth. It's no secret that we have an ice crises in our community. To many of our brothers and sisters are hooked on smoking ice which often results in committing crimes to support their addiction. **Studies using data from FBI Uniform Crime Reports, the Census, the Bureau of labor Statistics, the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Beer Institute indicate that legalization has not resulted in increases in crime.** In fact, researchers have suggested that any

increase in criminality has resulted from its prohibition, rather than the substance itself. <sup>Just a way to divert the state</sup> The Commonwealth's energy, resources and focus must be directed towards how do we help our brothers and sisters who are addicted to Meth. Energy and resources spent on prosecuting or defending marijuana related offenses takes away focus from fixing our ice problem. Revenues generated through a regulated cannabis industry can support those efforts.

Which leads me to my last point, the CNMI needs economic diversification. While we will not likely feel the economic impact that Nevada, Colorado, Washington or California is experiencing in large part because we don't have millions of people living here, we shouldn't be dependent solely on gambling as the primary driver of our economy. We did that with the garment industry and looked what happened there.

<sup>To that end, our economy requires you to look at alternatives</sup> As a resident of Tinian, I believe that Tinian should be allowed to create economic opportunities for its people. Frankly, I'm sick and tired of this perception that all we do is ask for hand-outs from Saipan. We don't want handouts. We want the opportunity at economic self-sustainability. We want an industry so that we don't have to rely on government employment to feed our families. ~~While I support the intent of this bill,~~ I am here to ask that each Senatorial district be allowed to decide for themselves when and how to legalize marijuana. ~~If the intent is to allow for legalization on those senatorial districts who~~

Statistics from Colorado which has legalized Marijuana states that it should be 55% in hand drug use.

And to that end, common sense supports the intent of the bill

to get us out of the end up to get us back to where we were 4 years ago.

To the support of Tinian or Tinian District



~~pass the popular initiative, why not go further and allow the senatorial districts to decide for themselves not in 2018 but today.~~ The fact is that even if you were to pass a law legalizing marijuana today, that law will not be able to take effect until the regulatory framework is implemented. All you have to do is look to the south an example of how long it takes to put that that together. And frankly, when you live on Tinian and Rota where economic development is a challenge, 2018 is a lifetime away.

We don't have the luxury of time. *so let Tinian legalize it*

My second request for consideration is to also allow for the senatorial districts to set up their own regulatory framework which best fits the island. I do not foresee the CNMI raking in hands over fist of cash as a result of this bill. We simply do not have the volume of consumers that states like Colorado, California or Washington. Allowing the Senatorial districts to set their own rates, such as the license fee for example which is currently included in the legislation, would give them the flexibility to figure out what would work best for each island given the unique challenges faced by each Senatorial district.

IN closing, I want to ask that you let Tinian legalize now.

Thank you for your time.



Name, for the record, position

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to talk.

Comments for SB 20-62, Senate Draft 1

Pg. 3, Lines 1-5 indicate what this bill will create: public safety programs, public school infrastructure and programs, support of the retirement fund, drug abuse treatment, and development of an industrial hemp industry". The bill does not specify, public awareness campaigns to educate the community about marijuana's harmful effects when not taken in moderation. The bill needs to address prevention, not just treatment if it is to pass this bill. ~~People need to know the risks associated with experimentation.~~

Save for later

If people are to be allowed to grow marijuana for personal use where children are involved, households need to attend a safety training for the appropriate use and storage of such plants. Accidental ingestion is preventable. It's important to let the public know that brain maturity is at the age of 25. Any drug taken before the brain is fully matured affects IQ level, exacerbate pre-existing conditions. But like all drugs, how is this different from tobacco and alcohol?

Page 14: Section 106 Exemptions, Subsection (a) (1) Lines 20-29: I don't understand how homegrown marijuana in households can legally mandate 6 mature plants and 24 immature plants. Can anyone justify how 24 immature plants is alright to have when you have six mature plants? Decrease that to 12 plants. And at the same time, on Page 15 in Subsection (a) (4) Lines 18-20 only says you can gift out at most 4 ounces of marijuana or 16 ounces of solid marijuana product at a time, and 72 ounces of marijuana in liquid form, and 10 grams of marijuana extract. Considering one plant produces 30% THC ounces, and if a situation arises where the person has 24 immature plants that do become mature, what can the person do with his crop in order to not be in violation? ~~Are we restricting~~

Subsection (a) (2): Medical marijuana use patients can have an unlimited number of marijuana plants. That seems a little excessive. Especially considering that the potency content of medical marijuana amounts to 10% 30% THC as where one plant can contain as much as 30% THC. There is a potential for overdose.

Pg. 18 Line 21, Section 107: Cannabis Commission, Subsection (c)(2): Typo "Possess a good mor character" where 'mor' should be indicated with 'moral'. Furthermore, page 18, Line 21 indicates a commission member to either have a degree OR five years work experiences. The word OR should be changed to AND. The message we tell our children is not to seek a degree, because a degree is comparable to work experience, which is not the same thing. You send the message that devalues education as an integral part of life.

Page 18: Line 27, Section 107: Subsection (c)(3) on Qualifications of Commissioners: indicates traffic offenses as allowable. This law needs to be changed to include DUI's as unallowable for Commission member, because DUI's are traffic offenses that carries a minimum penalty of (3 days in prison) to a maximum of 1 year in prison. Traffic offenses should not prohibit anyone from becoming a board member, except in the cases of a DUI.

Page 19: Line 29 Section 107: Subsection (i): Quorum: Those 5 members indicate a quorum, with at least one person from Tinian or Rota. I would like to change this language to and. It has been far too long that either Tinian or Rota is represented. WE are one people, but we have different views; and BOTH tinian and ROTA NEED TO BE REPRESENTED on the table.



Page 22: Line 24, Section 108: subsection (l) indicates regulation and prohibition of advertising by manufactures, processors, wholesalers or retailers of marijuana items whatsoever. This is a violation of the First Amendment. From comments I've heard from the general public, we can advertise the Marianas as a place where tourists are able to experiment and try marijuana in a safe environment that legalizes it. This goes against that. Furthermore, this prevents free speech. Another way to think about this is pharmaceutical companies advertise drugs all the time. They indicate the benefits of the drug and also include disclaimer on side effects and contraindications. Why can we not do the same with wholesalers or retailers? This is not fair.

Page 23: Section 109: Executive Director: Subsection (b)(4): Qualifications of the Executive Director: Traffic offenses include DUI's, which again are not appropriate for an Executive Director. This needs to specify that DUI's are not permissible.

Page 24: Section 109: Rules and Regulations: Subsection (f): The Executive Director has an \$85K maximum annual salary??? This is ridiculous. We can find funds to create positions of high power with good money, but we can't increase the minimum wage for employees? Indicate this to no more than \$50K. Furthermore, where exactly is compensation coming from? Who is going to fund these? Are we taking money away from the budget to fund this position?

Page 25: Section 113: No Liability for Official Acts: No member may be sued for doing or omitting to do any act in the performance of duties as prescribed in the Act?? This needs to be changed to reflect acts or no acts rendered in good faith of their duties.

Page 26: Section 118: Limitations Applied. This entire section limits how much a consumer can buy. Do we impose the same sanction on tobacco and alcohol for how much a person can buy at one time per transaction? If we don't, then why are we regulating how much a person of legal age can buy? It just does not make sense. Just tax the product.

Page 33: section 136: Application for License; Rules; Fees. Need to indicate that in addition to the application; a safety training needs to be included as mandatory attendance. This safety training must encompass risks and mitigation that needs to be addressed to prevent unlawful use of minors who do not fit the medical criteria. Refer back to R2, pg 1

Page 38: Lines 6- 17: Section 145: Importing and exporting marijuana prohibited: I'd like to raise concerns over when the Commission will allow the exportation of marijuana? And IF we do, we should keep the money within the Mariana Islands? If we are to market ourselves here for tourism purposes, we keep the money here, and we can track how well we manage our finance and operations

Page 51: Section 170; Subsection b) indicates an excise tax. I recommend we think about using a value added tax instead for better accountability.

*I fully support the intent of the bill, and I hope to see progress w/ amendments on the bill,*

*Another concern is the discrepancy of drug testing & private business*

