

TESTIMONY OF JESSE WINFIELD SULLIVAN  
BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ON HOUSE BILL 1393 COMPASSIONATE USE ACT OF 2009

Good morning, Chairmen Oliver and Baker, and Members of the Committee. My name is Jesse Sullivan and I was born on October 15, 1978 in York County. I now live in Mount Joy in Lancaster County. I was a Correctional Officer from April of 2004 through August of 2008 at York County Prison. I was also honorably discharged from the United States Marine Corps after completing four years of active duty in the Infantry, where I held the job title of Infantryman and Marine Rifle and Pistol Coach.

I would like to speak about something very close to my heart. The issue is the incarceration of the chronically ill. Once incarcerated, their fundamental right to choose treatment and medication regimens for their diseases is stripped from them. I have been hesitant in the past to speak on this subject due to my connection with the correctional system, however today I am stepping forward so that I may exercise my right to free speech and have my voice heard.

The treatment of the chronically ill by incarceration for self medicating is inhumane. I have seen dying men in prison for small amounts of marijuana for medical use. How is that justice? Who among us has the right to impose upon another our belief in how we think they should cope with a debilitating disease?

I speak of incredibly painful and depressing diseases such as AIDS, Hepatitis, multiple sclerosis, and cancer. This is not only cruel but completely defies Pennsylvania's Constitution. Section 2 under political powers in the Pennsylvania Constitution states "All power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness. For the advancement of these ends they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish their government in such manner as they may think proper".

With those words in mind, it would seem to me that we are egregiously askew from what our forefathers envisioned for this great state. I find it outrageous and absurd that we are here today fighting for the very rights that are granted us as a people in the constitution.

What are the issues? One major issue is that the right for a Pennsylvania resident to make a decision of their own free will, which hurts no other person, has been long ago taken. However the bigger issue is

humanity, and the fact that a person suffering from a fatal disease should not have to be burdened with insufferable pain, and the fear that should they choose to self medicate they could die in a cold prison cell.

Most of us can not fathom what these people suffer with every day, but everyone understands money, so lets look at this from a cold financial respect. The moment someone is arrested for even a small marijuana possession the tax payers begin footing the bill for this person. This person may no longer medicate with marijuana for relief, so where marijuana relieved a multitude of symptoms, this person must now have a separate medication for each symptom. I think we can all understand the obvious costs for an inmate - housing, food, and officers to staff the institution. That amounts to nothing compared to the bill the taxpayers foot for their medical care.

It's hard to pick one hideous disease over another as they all cause such suffering, but let's for a moment focus on one: AIDS. The average incarcerated AIDS patient will cost \$4684.92 a month. Shocking? That is only the cost for their life sustaining medication, this does not include the medication they now need to curb the side effects of that life sustaining medication. You can find in any drug book or pharmacy the most common side effects of Kaletra, Viread, Izentress, and combivir.

For each of these drugs the most common side effects are: anorexia, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, extremity pain and headache. So now add the cost of all the medication needed to treat those intolerable side effects. Along with that consider that they require a special diet full of protein and calories, along with supplemental drinks to keep them from major weight loss. So let's do some math, all of these medical needs addressed, this inmate costs the tax payers close to \$8000.00 a month. Hardly seems worth it for a \$300.00 offense.

I am now going to address my personal issues, that I have had to overcome without the help of my Country or State. I suffer from depression, anxiety, and insomnia, some of which was brought on from the traumatic experiences suffered in the service and from working in maximum security in the prison system. I have seen death, suffering, been placed in unnerving positions and high tension situations which, unless you have been there, you would not understand.

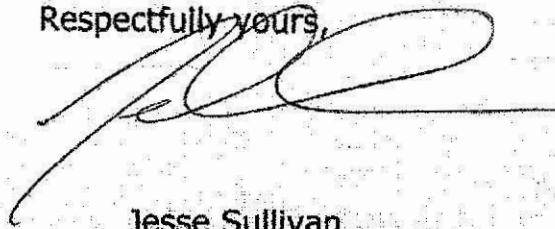
Doctors have prescribed me different medications but all have their own drawbacks. The most recent was Ambien with which for the first time in my life I had suicidal thoughts. Why is this drug legal, that has claimed lives

but I am not allowed to chose to ingest a plant that the "Maker" (if you believe in one) himself has placed here for us.

My adult life has been spent serving our nation and local community and for this I want to be able to chose how I medicate.

My testimony is submitted according to the law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Rules of the House of Representatives. Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

Respectfully yours,



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