

TESTIMONY OF NELSON A LEWIS  
BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ON HB 1393 COMPASSIONATE USE ACT OF 2009

Good morning, Chairmen Oliver and Baker, and Members of the Committee. My name is Arn Lewis, and I am from Huntington Mills, Luzerne County, PA. I am submitting this testimony to urge passage of the Compassionate Use Act of 2009 by this Committee and the House of Representatives.

I am 52 years old and have been disabled for the past three years. My disability stems from advanced emphysema and a spinal injury I received in an auto accident 13 years ago. I was hospitalized in February of this year, and almost died from internal bleeding due to a massive hemorrhaging of my lower intestines. I was unable to eat anything for 17 days and lost 19 pounds during that period. I am 5' 7" and my normal weight was 145 pounds, so I was down to 126lbs and appeared skeletal. After returning home I was still unable to eat right due to a constant pain in my abdomen, and *nothing* I tried to eat would stay down.

About two weeks after my release from the hospital a doctor suggested to me "off the record" that I try using marijuana to help regain my appetite and build my strength back up. Fully aware of its legal standing in Pennsylvania, I decided to do it anyway. Within two weeks I had regained my appetite and put back on the weight I had lost and then some, I now weigh 159 pounds. However, I soon noticed a few other "side effects" that appeared to be the result of the marijuana. *The chronic pain that I had from the spinal injury (lower back pain, chronic pain in my right arm and joint pain in my left shoulder from arthritis) had subsided to the point that I had been taking less and less of my prescribed pain medications.*

I have been on chronic use of Vicodin and Vicoprofin for pain and had been given several others in an attempt to find something that would help the pain without side effects that were often worse than the pain itself. I have been on Naproxen, Mobic, Methocarbamol, Tramadol, and several others including a procedure in which medicine was injected directly into my spine and rib bones. The only ones that worked well for the pain seemed to be the narcotics, which had side effects that were not so pleasant, not the least of which are their addictive properties and their tendency to make me sluggish and groggy without the energy to get up and do even the most basic of daily chores. With the marijuana I took less and less of the narcotics, and not only did I have **more** energy for my daily activities, I also had much more interest in doing them.

Perhaps the most surprising effect, though, was that my breathing actually seemed to improve. This was totally unexpected and I intend to have another lung function test done to verify it for myself and for my Pulmonary

Physician. The Federal Institute of Medicine's 1999 report entitled "Marijuana and Medicine" concluded that "Cannabis and its derivatives have shown promise in the treatment of a variety of disorders. The evidence is most impressive in ... asthma, where they approach isoproterenol in effectiveness". THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) not only opens the airways but reduces inflammation. A similar mechanism may be at play in my own situation.

One of the most troublesome symptoms of Emphysema is the inability to exhale properly and fully, making it almost impossible to expel all of the carbon dioxide from the lungs. My last lung function test showed that I only had 36% of my full lung capacity and I was only able to expel 70% of what I took in. After smoking marijuana, I not only seem to be able to take deeper breaths, but I also am able to expel it more quickly and completely than I could even after taking my inhaler (pro-air) or my steroid treatments (Advair and Spiriva). This was very unexpected and hard for me to understand or even believe until last week when I read a study published by the European Respiratory Journal that concluded that marijuana and cigarette smoke had contrasting effects on lung function. Where tobacco smokes makes it harder to expel air, marijuana smoke seems to improve the ability to expel and to inhale more deeply. Other studies by Yale University and the University of British Columbia both reported that marijuana smoke, even long term, had no association with declining lung function nor was it associated with an increased risk of COPD and their studies showed that it protected, rather than harmed.

The passage of HB 1393 would serve to make available to thousands of Pennsylvanians a safer and more reliable source of chronic pain relief than those provided through the use of narcotics. It would also give the thousands of patients that are suffering from cancer and HIV the needed appetite and freedom from nausea to help them keep their weight and energy levels up so they are more able to cope with the extreme treatment procedures (Chemo, etc.) that sufferers of these diseases must go through to survive.

This is no longer 1937, and the US population is now largely aware of the fact that the claims made by Harry Anslinger over 70 years ago were based on racism and his own personal vendetta against users of marijuana and those he called members of the degenerate races, (Mexicans, Blacks and Chinese). Thousands of pages of research published by Universities and Medical Journals in the US and around the world have consistently found that the Cannabinoids in Marijuana have properties that inhibit the growth of cancer cells while preventing new cells from forming, that they are useful in the treatment of Alzheimer's Disease and several other forms of age related dementia, that it relieves chronic pain without the unpleasant and often dangerous side effects of NSAIDs and narcotics.

Perhaps the most complete studies ever done are those included in the

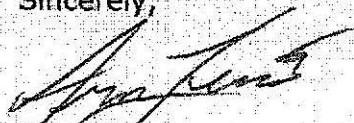
evidence for the US Government and Department of Health and Human Services' patent on cannabidiol as an antioxidant and neuroprotector, (US Patent #6630507). The patent has an extensive list of medical applications for CBD and the other cannabinoids found in Marijuana, and it also indicates that even at chronic (daily) acute high dosages (over 700mg) over periods of time there were no signs of toxicity or any indications of any harmful side effects. Included in the Dept. of Health's list of medical applications as printed in the patent are: Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, HIV, Glaucoma, Down's syndrome, myocardial infarction, emphysema and several others.

I believe it's time for the Government to step up and admit that Marijuana is a useful medicine as indicated by the patent they received six years ago and that it is not the deadly drug they have claimed it to be for the past seventy years. To date, not one single case of cancer has been connected to marijuana use, nor has there ever been a single overdose reported or death of any type that could be associated with marijuana use. No other drug on Earth can make that claim, not even Aspirin. Marijuana is, quite simply, and verifiably, the safest drug on Earth. The number of deaths every year due to over the counter and prescription medications is increasing annually, and many of these deaths could have been avoided had these patients had access to the safer and often more effective use of Cannabinoids, instead of narcotics and other dangerous drugs.

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.

Dated: 09/10/2009

Sincerely,



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