

TESTIMONY OF John Loy  
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. I am a 51 year old male named John Loy, and I am submitting this testimony to urge passage of the Compassionate Use Act of 2009 (HB 1393) by this Committee and the General Assembly. I wish to voice my opinion on the legalization of medical marijuana.

In February of 1979 I was diagnosed with walking pneumonia. From that I had a damaged kidney which caused fluid retention. After two (2) weeks the doctor told me my kidney had repaired itself and I was good to go. However, my hands and fingers were still swollen. They ran their barrage of tests but the tests always came back, fine. Scores of doctors later, I was still working light-duty at my job because of my hands swelling. While doing the light-duty work I twisted my knees, which didn't seem to get any better. From there it went to my hips, which finally took me to a rheumatologist in May of 1979.

While on my initial, extended visit, I mentioned that my hands were swelling, that I had pneumonia a few months back and that's when the swelling started. That doctor admitted me to a hospital where they ran their barrage of tests, and at the end of my two-week stay I was diagnosed with Progressive Systemic Sclerosis, Scleroderma in short. My Scleroderma is much more severe than most cases. I became disabled in 1981. I've had to have five fingers amputated, and three shortened. Scleroderma caused painful ulcers that were almost all I could bare, not to mention the pain from the surgeries. The doctor prescribed pain medicine, but I knew that I could become addicted, and so I only used the pain medications when *absolutely* needed.

Over the years my weight had slipped to and bottomed out at 114 lbs. *I'm* 5'9". I was literally skin and bone. Now I am desperate to gain weight. So desperate, that it upset my stomach from the worry. My doctor prescribed Marinol, and I gained a few pounds while taking it but the side-effect was a throbbing headache with each dose.

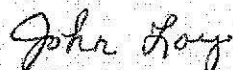
Finally, an acquaintance approached me and asked about my weight. I told him nothing I've tried really worked at increasing my appetite without side-effects. With that, he said he would stop over for a visit that same evening, and arrived early in the evening. We sat and chatted a bit then he asked if I'd ever smoked marijuana. I told him I had in my early 20's, once. He then asked, "Don't you remember getting the munchies?" I told him that I had Marinol which was a synthetic marijuana but in capsule form, and that it gave me a splitting headache each time I took it. He then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a joint, which is a cigarette with marijuana instead of tobacco.

Comparing the two forms - natural and synthetic, smoking verses pill form - hands down, *smoking marijuana works much, much faster and works much better than the oral pill medication.* With the Marinol medication, I didn't get any relief from pain, in fact it *caused* pain. Thanks to plant form marijuana, I am now about 128 lbs. I still look thin but I'm slowly gaining.

The darker side to my scenario is that my Scleroderma and my instinct for survival have made me into a criminal. You may say "Shame on you" but I'll say, "Shame on YOU!" Don't force me to continue using this medicine in secret, potentially putting myself or my family at risk of arrest. It's unfair and quite disturbing that our government would even consider not allowing it.

Do the right thing, vote "YES" for the legalization of medical marijuana! Support the Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act (HB 1393), and ease some of our pain and suffering.

Sincerely,



John Loy  
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