

**TESTIMONY OF TOMMY SCHIAVONI
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 Tommy Schiavoni from Dauphin County.

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 would like to begin by explaining my reasoning in urging the passing of the Compassionate Use Act and how it can help me. About 5 years ago, I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease; Crohn's is an incurable chronic inflammatory disease, which affects my large and small bowels as well as my intestines. Going into the hospital 5 years ago I weighed about 112 pounds which is extremely unhealthy considering I am almost 6ft tall. I spent about 14 days in the hospital, in which I missed Thanksgiving with all my family. While people were at home with their families eating the traditional Thanksgiving meal I was laying in a hospital bed being fed through a line in my arm because I was unable to eat any solid food for days. When I got out of the hospital I knew that I was going to be in for a rough road ahead. Over the past 5 years I have been on numerous expensive medications in which most of them have extremely harmful and terrifying side effects such as Remicade, Asacol, Imuran, numerous high doses of Prednisone, and most recently Humira. Through the 5 years that I have been on and off my prescription drugs I have had fair to moderate improvements, between many hospital visits and 4 blood transfusions (which also has severe side effects) due to my anemia which is onset by my Crohn's, however, through all my trials and tribulations the one drug that I have used and most important that I did not mention above, one that I am thankful for everyday is Cannabis.

Cannabis has helped me manage my Crohn's on so many levels. Cannabis has helped me with my severe pain that I experience on a regular daily basis, in addition to helping me be able to eat. For example, my bowel's are so damaged from my Crohn's that I could take only a few bites of a sandwich and have to stop because I know if I eat anymore I will regret it, unless I resort to my good friend Cannabis. Cannabis relaxes my bowels which in turn takes away the pain and discomfort and allows me to eat more than just a few bites. I know for a fact that without the use of cannabis I definitely would not be able to sustain my Crohn's Disease, or my weight like I have been.

Cannabis for me is the best way to manage my Crohn's Disease compared to those strong prescription drugs or even popular pain medications. Over the course of the 5 years I have been on a variety of different pain medicines which research shows can be highly addictive and dangerous, Cannabis is neither of the two. Cannabis is a healthier more positive choice in managing any disease rather than resorting to those expensive powerful drugs that have horrifying side effects that almost always lead to another problem either just as severe as or even more severe than the original diagnosis.

I feel that Pennsylvania would benefit from allowing Medical Marijuana. Pennsylvania Compassion Centers (Dispensaries) would not only help out the economy by adding jobs but most importantly be a safe, affordable and easy way for patients to get the relief they need in order to proceed with their daily lives. I know it is hard for others to understand where I am coming from but until you have such a painful, excruciating and debilitating disease you just won't understand how much Cannabis helps us. There are 13 other states in the United States that have Medical Marijuana Laws please lets make Pennsylvania the 14th state. Let's help all of our fellow Pennsylvania citizens that have a painful serious health condition like myself that need cannabis. My doctor has informed me after being diagnosed that I have a severe and active case of Crohn's disease and that I will never be close to 100% again in my lifetime. Myself and others like me do not deserve to suffer, don't you think we have been through enough. We just want safe access to cannabis to treat our conditions in a way we know works best for us.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely,

Dated: 11/30/2009

TOMMY SCHIAVONI