

## Testimony of Beth McCormack – Representative Delozier's Constituent

Attending Representatives,

My name is Beth McCormack and I am an adult epileptic, I was not born with epilepsy, I developed it when I was a teenager after a traumatic brain injury. My brain injury was a tumble down a few stairs going to class during school with a heavy book bag, I guess my circumstances show you that anyone can develop epilepsy. I was misdiagnosed at first which then led to a car accident where I had a drove head on into an empty school bus with my head shattering the windshield. I am 32 years old and currently living in a section 8 facility with primarily older residents. I am in this situation because my epilepsy will not stop, I had 8cm of scarred brain matter removed in 2008. I was lucky enough to go through 2 months of seizure freedom, so I started working again on a part-time basis. My seizures prevailed however, so unfortunately I am currently living on social security disability. I do not want this life, I want to work, I want to have a family, and I'm sure no-one will ever say this to you again in your lifetime but I want to pay taxes.

Now since this is for 2 committees I will start off with information for the health committee, a big problem that the PA medical association continues to point out is the lack of clinical studies in humans, they prefer to say the studies are anecdotal. I understand where they are coming from, they don't want to possibly get sued if they don't know all of the possible side effects of marijuana. But there have been clinical animal studies that show excellent results using marijuana for epilepsy as well as cancer. That is where pharmaceutical drugs start out, then they have human studies, I would be more than willing to be a guinea pig for an organic plant, rather than some of the pharmaceutical drugs. I have tried just about every medication out there currently for epilepsy. Every single one has a side effect of possible seizures, something marijuana does not cause. Some other pharmaceuticals side effects are blindness, deadly rashes, suicidal behavior, jaundice, trouble breathing, frequent infections, trouble with coordination and walking. Those side effects are just a handful of things current pharmaceuticals can cause. Lastly it seems the biggest problem with medical marijuana is the THC part, which has the phsycoactive effects on a person. The pharmaceutical drug Marinol is man-made THC and that has been legal in the U.S. since the 1990's. Also there is a drug called Epidolex which currently has high doses of man made CBD

which has reached orphan drug status in the U.S., but alas it is only for children with a very severe and not very common form of epilepsy, so someone like me is excluded.

Now for the judicial side of medical marijuana. Wouldn't it be better for Pennsylvanians to be able to get their medicine from their doctor than to have to go out on the streets to try and find medicine to help them live a healthy and productive life? Wouldn't it be better for the already over-worked police officers to spend their time on more important crimes like murder and rape? If a patient can get their medicine from the pharmacy instead of the streets, you can stop the demand, therefore the suppliers have no more business. Then the drug dealers on the streets can turn to a more productive life as well. Constantly looking for and prosecuting non-violent drug offenders will cut down the amount of people in prison. Which will then cut down on the amount of money tax-payers pay to feed, house, clothe and over-around take care of them. It can hopefully cut short the growing epidemic of over-crowding in prisons. Maybe medical marijuana can decrease the amount of deadly over-doses related to prescription drugs. I know this from personal experience because the first medication that I tried to halt my seizures caused me severe depression and I attempted suicide (by overdosing) on several occasions. This year a bill was introduced to the federal government to re-classify marijuana so testing would be easier to do. But I as well as so many other patients don't have time for that. Pennsylvanians are moving out so they can get medicine, but I can't, my whole family lives in this area and I could never leave my nieces and nephews, who I love so much.

Right now I know I will not have a long life because the prescription medicine that I take is slowly destroying my liver and kidneys, surely I will have a slow painful death. I don't want that for me or for the helpless little children who also have uncontrolled epilepsy. I would like to see those children riding big wheels, and enjoying childhood. The exact same way that all of you and I had a chance to do. Our lives are in your hands, give us hope. Let us pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Let us choose whether we want to try an organic plant, or continue on with pharmaceutical remedies, whichever works for us. Let us have the freedom which our forefathers died defending.

Thank you for your time,  
Beth McCormack