

General Law Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-970

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CANNABINOIDS, HEMP AND HEMP PRODUCTS.

Vote Date: 3/24/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/19/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Senator Cathy Osten, 19th District

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill was proposed in response to concerns raised by hemp farmers in Senator Osten's district and across the state. Some argue that Public Act 24-76 unintentionally prevented hemp farming, harvesting, and manufacturing from legally occurring in Connecticut. Senate Bill 970 contains various measures intended to support hemp farming and the manufacture of high-CBD, low-THC products in our state.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner, Department of Consumer Protection \(DCP\)](#) provided comments that express appreciation for the intent of the bill but raise multiple concerns. Commissioner Cafferelli warns that allowing the production of products that are "manufactured through processes that are untested and unverified by any state or federal entity" could present major risks to public health and safety. Allowing for the manufacture of high-THC products (that are not compliant with Connecticut's limits) for sale out of state poses enforcement challenges for DCP. Commissioner Cafferelli states that investigating potential violations would be difficult because if an investigator finds an illegal product, the company could just claim that it is intended to be sold out of state.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Christina Capitan, Co-Founder, CT CannaWarriors](#) supports SB 970's efforts to help hemp farmers but argues that the legislation should take further measures to aid those farmers' recovery. Ms. Capitan adds that she thinks it is unfair that people with felony convictions for

growing cannabis cannot grow hemp, and she argues that the committee should eliminate this restriction.

Vincenzo Davis, Interim President, UConn Cannabis Club provided testimony in support of SB 970 because it would create a safer environment for research in hemp science and cultivation. He notes that many students in UConn's cannabis cultivation programs worry about how restrictions on hemp could negatively impact their research. Mr. Davis states that students would like to stay in state, but they are concerned that current legislation could cause Connecticut's hemp market to relocate. He urges the committee to support the bill in the name of scientific progress.

Erin Doolittle, CT CannaWarriors testified in support of SB 970, writing that high THC hemp products and cannabidiol products are essential to Connecticut residents with various health issues. She states that it is currently impossible for patients to learn about these products in regular stores. Ms. Doolittle encourages the committee to support the bill because it will enhance quality of life for Connecticut's patients.

Brian Gage is in favor of SB 970, stating that he uses hemp-derived cannabinoids to support his physical and mental health. He appreciates the alternative they offer to pharmaceutical medications, and he finds it critical to know whether what he is using is "clean, lab-tested, and produced responsibly." Mr. Gage argues that Public Act 24-76 decimated the hemp market in Connecticut, and he expresses disappointment that local businesses have had to shut down after the passage of this legislation. He characterizes SB 970 as a better path forward, listing various aspects of what the bill would accomplish. Overall, Mr. Gage views the bill as critical to the future of the hemp industry in the state.

Jacob Honig, Co-Owner, The CBG Gurus, LLC supports SB 970, arguing that it will "re-legalize" hemp manufacturing and empower farmers and manufacturers to support the state's dispensaries. Mr. Honig explains the impact of Public Act 24-76 on Connecticut farmers and maintains that changes are urgently needed in order to save the state's hemp industry. He adds that the same legislation also had a profound negative impact on hemp and cannabinoid research at the state's research universities. He urges passage of SB 970 as "an opportunity to save the hemp industry."

Guillermo Marin submitted testimony in favor of the legislation, citing the medical benefits of CBD, CBG, and other low-THC products. He characterizes previous legislation as unfairly targeting hemp farmers. Mr. Marin asks that the committee support the hemp industry while recognizing the difference between natural hemp and synthetics.

Duncan Markovich, Founder and Owner, Better Ways LLC supports SB 970 because he believes it will correct past over-regulation of the state's hemp industry. He argues that supporting this bill will "illustrate that our state actually cares about its own citizens small business owners, and farmers." Mr. Markovich's testimony also provides general commentary pertaining to issues outside the scope of this particular piece of legislation.

Laurel Mondou submitted testimony supporting SB 970, citing hemp's versatility and usefulness. They believe that growing hemp will help revitalize farming across Connecticut's communities.

Neal Musk, Owner, Northeast Clones submitted testimony in support of SB 970, stating that the hemp industry is in crisis and that he believes that it will be gone by 2027 if the legislature declines to take action. He cites a marked decrease in hemp harvesting in 2024 as evidence that current regulations are detrimental to the hemp market. Mr. Musk adds that there is unmet demand for low-THC hemp products, and he states that local producers would be able to help meet that demand. He urges the committee to support the bill to help revitalize a hemp market that can benefit all.

Marcela Osello testified in support of SB 970, stating that it is a "necessary and urgent measure to restore Connecticut's hemp industry, strengthen the regulated cannabis market, and enhance consumer safety." Ms. Osello explains Public Act 24-76's perceived impact on the state's hemp market and argues that this law is a roadblock to hemp farmers who would like to help meet increased demand for low-THC products. She states that this previous legislation has prompted an increase in unregulated products, and it has negatively impacted Connecticut's research institutions. Ms. Osello supports SB 970 as an attempt to restore the state's hemp industry, address product shortages, protect consumer safety, and support research activity.

Lou Rinaldi supports SB 970 but characterizes the legislation as a "stopgap measure," arguing that it does not go far enough to support the state's cannabis industry. He voices support for the provisions that help diversify the state's supply chain, as he believes it will increase fairness and spur innovation. He states that SB 970 will help correct the "unworkable regulatory framework" for Connecticut's hemp farmers. Although he believes the bill does not fix the core issues facing the state's cannabis industry, he thinks it is a step in the right direction.

Samantha Schertz submitted testimony supporting this legislation, as she believes it will ensure that the state's hemp market is "safe, regulated, and thriving." She states that it will re-establish Connecticut's market for hemp products while protecting consumer safety. Ms. Schertz points out the testing standards included in the bill. She also believes that the proposed changes will strengthen partnerships between farmers and local businesses, expand hemp farmers' potential markets, and spur economic growth. Ms. Schertz adds that the bill would support scientific research at state universities and provide hemp farmers with legal protections. She urges passage of the bill, describing its approach as "balanced and thoughtful."

Kevin Skulczyck, National Spokesperson, Crosses 4 America submitted written testimony in support of SB 970. Mr. Skulczyck recounts his past service as State Representative for the 45th District and discloses that after he served, he opened a hemp farm with a business partner. He argues that legislative support of the hemp industry could lead to substantial return on investment. Mr. Skulczyck states that as a recovering alcoholic, he has also personally experienced the positive impact of CBD products. He maintains that SB 970 presents an important opportunity for the committee to restore legal hemp manufacturing, protect many residents' livelihoods, and demonstrate commitment to the health and well-being of constituents.

Thomas Sobocinski supports the safe harbor provisions for hemp manufacturers that are included in SB 970. He explains that many surrounding states allow for higher THC content than Connecticut's three milligram limit. If these restrictions are lifted, Connecticut beverage

manufacturers could better compete in the infused beverage market. He requests that the committee modify testing requirements so that only the final product is required to comply with the 0.3% THC limit, as current standards present logistical challenges.

[Andy W](#) submitted comments in support of SB 970 as an attempt to correct what he views as damaging legislation passed in 2023 and 2024. He expresses frustration with the General Law Committee's past actions limiting the THC in CBD products. Andy W argues that past legislation has restricted the sale of products containing any THC to dispensaries. He states that Connecticut's CBD stores have closed and consumers are turning to out of state businesses to meet their needs. Andy W. then provides a detailed recounting of the CBD products he found for sale during recent personal investigations. His testimony lists various proposals included in the bill and presents personal arguments for the bill's passage.

[Uzma Zakir, Pharmacist, bloomHigher](#) supports SB 970 as a pharmacist specializing in medical cannabis. She states that awareness of the benefits of CBD and cannabinoids is growing, so demand is increasing. Ms. Zakir argues that the current supply is not sufficient to meet patients' needs, and she claims that Connecticut is "the only state where you can't find CBD at a dispensary." She claims that dispensaries and retailers would like to offer increased choice to patients, and she urges passage of SB 970 to create a "collaborative and well-regulated market" where all can benefit.

[Gordon Whelpley, CEO, FloatHouse Beverages](#) testified in support of SB 970 and offered recommendations for further changes. He appreciates the bill's safe harbor provisions but requests clarification from DCP as to whether his business can package a can that is compliant with Rhode Island's labeling regulations. While Mr. Whelpley understands that some argue that proposed changes would increase availability of illicit products, he argues that Connecticut's regulations and Float House's operating procedures present strict controls that ensure compliance. Float House also characterizes the bill's changes to testing requirements as an improvement, but the company would like to see further changes that would simplify manufacturing processes and provide for the same small amount of leeway permitted in other states. Mr. Whelpley's testimony suggests changes to the state's excise tax on the product and requests increased flexibility in terms of packaging format.

The following **twelve members of the public** submitted testimony in support of SB 970. They share personal stories about the benefits they have experienced from using CBD and THC products as medicine:

Christopher Iglesia
Eileen Kopec
Robin Kristoff
John Montague
CareyAnn Mulhern
Jeannie Peare

ToniMarie Prah
Noah Sferra
Amanda Smith
Colleen Smith
Robert Smith
Anonymous

The following **nine members of the public** submitted comments expressing general support for the legislation:

- Dawn
- Gail Craig
- Jada Dunsen

- Michael Goldstein
- Susan Mendez
- Danette Mondou
- Erica Pierce
- Austin Primus
- Stacey Bernstein

An **additional anonymous member of the public** submitted comments expressing uncharacterized support for SB 970.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Michael Goodenough, CEO, DG AgTek, LLC](#) testified to comment on the legislation and several other bills under the General Law Committee's consideration. He expresses frustration with the current state of cannabis and hemp policies in Connecticut, relaying his personal experiences. His comments largely pertain to other bills before the committee, but he adds that he urges the committee to "support a version of SB 970."

Requesting clarification: [Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council \(CMCC\)](#) submitted written testimony requesting technical clarification to the definition of "synthetic cannabinoid" in lines 218-235, noting that some delta-8 THC is naturally produced by cannabis plants. They point out that the definition of "naturally manufactured hemp cannabinoid" in line 197-217 currently conflicts with federal law.

[Ann Marie Luisi-Rosado](#) provided general comments regarding multiple cannabis and hemp bills under consideration by the General Law Committee. She expresses support for HB970, arguing that Connecticut farmers should be able to sell products in our state's dispensaries. The remainder of her testimony largely provides critique on other bills under consideration.

[Matthew Schillberg, Graduate Assistant, University of Connecticut](#) submitted general comments pertaining to multiple cannabis and hemp bills under consideration by the General Law Committee. His comments regarding SB 970 stress the importance of providing scientifically accurate definitions of terms included in hemp and cannabis legislation. Mr. Schillberg argues that without these definitions, hemp farmers will be unable to produce and extract their products.

[Gretchen Swanson](#) submitted general comments expressing support for "full legalization of marijuana and hemp for medical, recreational and industrial purposes."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Sharena Rankin](#) and [Josiah Schlee, Medical Cannabis Advocate](#) oppose the legislation for various personal reasons.

Reported by: Betsy Francolino

Date: March 28, 2025