

General Law Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5350 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING CANNABIS, HEMP AND INFUSED BEVERAGE
Title: REGULATION.

Vote Date: 3/16/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL

General Law Committee

REASONS FOR BILL

The General Law Committee raised this bill with the intent of improving operations of Connecticut's adult-use cannabis market. It is aimed at reducing regulatory hurdles, increasing access to product, and increasing the market's competitiveness with neighboring states. As the bill's chief proponent, House Majority Leader State Representative Jason Rojas filed [written testimony](#) detailing the bill's provisions and their associated rationale.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE

The substitute language (LCO 3230) makes numerous changes to the raised bill in response to feedback received throughout the committee process. The most significant change is that it removes provisions that would have allowed for various forms of on-premises consumption of cannabis, cannabis products, and infused beverages.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY

[Department of Consumer Protection \(DCP\)—Bryan Cafferelli, Commissioner](#) provided written commentary on HB 5350. DCP acknowledges the work that went into creating the bill but highlights concerns that certain measures would require resources not currently accounted for in the Governor's budget.

[Social Equity Council, Brandon McGee, Chief Executive Officer](#) testified to comment on HB 5350. The Council expresses concern with provisions regarding changes in ownership provisions of equity joint ventures, noting that Section 53 of the raised bill is not in line with

current policy. They express general opposition to allowing hemp farmers into the cannabis space but suggest openness to considering a limited pathway that includes strong safeguards for existing market participants.

[Erin Kirk, Cannabis Ombudsman](#) presented testimony that focuses on research regarding medical cannabis patients' opinions on topics related to the bill. This research was conducted with the assistance of [Matthew Schillberg](#), an M.S. candidate in UConn's Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, who provided similar testimony. They testify that findings indicate that while patients value legal medical cannabis, many face issues with cost and supply. Consequently, they are forced to ration their medication, switch dispensaries, or purchase products out of state.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

[State Representative Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader](#) testified in strong support of HB 5350. He characterizes the bill as an effort to address various challenges and regulatory hurdles that have become apparent over the three years Connecticut's adult-use cannabis market has been operational. Majority Leader Rojas notes that prices are often higher in Connecticut compared to neighboring states such as Massachusetts, and HB 5350 aims to lower prices by increasing the availability of raw materials and reducing unnecessary regulatory burden. With these changes, he argues that the state can recapture revenue that is lost when Connecticut residents travel outside our borders to make their purchases. (Majority Leader Rojas notes that 65 of the bill's 102 sections either contain technical and conforming changes or update the term "marijuana" to "cannabis.") He urges the committee to report the bill favorably.

[Connecticut Infused Beverage Manufacturers—Gordon Whelpley, Founder, Float House](#) testified on behalf of all six Connecticut-based infused beverage manufacturers to express support for the bill. They appreciate the proposed five-milligram limit in liquor stores and ten-milligram limit in dispensaries, as they testify that it reflects developments in the market while maintaining careful safeguards. The beverage manufacturers request various technical amendments, and their written testimony includes suggested language. An appendix includes supplemental resources.

[Fine Fettle Dispensaries, Ben Zachs, Chief Operating Officer](#) supports the overall direction of the bill, testifying that it is an important step in correcting structural issues in the cannabis market in Connecticut. Fine Fettle's written testimony provides suggested language that would reduce the operational burden of the pharmacist requirement. They provide additional language that would narrow the scope of the commercial extractor license by limiting it to infused beverage manufacturing. Lastly, Fine Fettle argues that the seven-year ownership restriction for equity joint ventures is not working. They provide proposed language that would overhaul this restriction.

[Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council \(CMCC\)](#) writes in support of the suggestions reflected in the bill so far. They note that they have met with members of the committee and staff members over the past several months to offer input, and they are pleased to see many of their recommendations reflected in the raised bill. CMCC urges the committee to advance these provisions.

[Uzma Zakir, RPh](#) supports clear labeling of irradiated cannabis and recommends that standardized in-store educational signage requirements would create a stronger Connecticut regulated market.

[Shirley Xu-Weldon, Product Manufacturer Licensee, Cat Rock Holistics CT LLC and Co-Founder, MUZE](#) is in support of the bill. She says that the changes proposed are moving in the right direction for Connecticut. She states that the bill will allow local licensees like her to innovate by removing operational barriers, allowing for competition with neighboring states, and stabilizing the path toward long term profitability. Her two pieces of testimony also provide recommendations for specific improvements to the bill's language.

[Jake Bullock, CEO & Co-Founder, The Cann+Botl Company](#) supports the proposed increase in THC levels for infused beverage products, stating that it better reflects consumer demands and aligns with Connecticut's regulatory framework. He cites the success of similar THC levels in other states and requests that, as the milligram threshold expands for THC beverages, the committee clarify the locations where these products can be purchased.

Requested amendments:

- Edit Chapter 545, Sections 30-33 to include THC-infused beverages
- Request technical amendment to Section 82 to add the words “coffee and tea”

[Alexis Terry](#) supports the bill.

GENERAL COMMENTS

[Budr Cannabis—Carl Tirella](#) provided comments on the bill and recommendations for improvements. He argues in support of additional flexibility regarding change of ownership of equity joint ventures. Tirella appreciates the changes that have been made regarding pharmacist requirements, but he also urges the committee to consider additional changes regarding the ratio of dispensing technicians per pharmacist. He expresses Budr's support for changes to potency and packaging restrictions, as well as for provisions allowing the sale of infused beverages with higher THC levels. Tirella states that Budr looks forward to working with the committee as they continue to refine the bill's provisions.

[Responsibility](#) takes no position on the bill but encourages the committee to include strong provisions to prevent impaired driving and prevent underage consumption. Their written testimony links to supplementary resources on this topic.

[Janell Mullen, Land Use Consultant](#) shares their opinions on the twelve-foot fencing requirement for outdoor cannabis cultivation. Mullen testifies that tall fencing has faced opposition in Litchfield County, as residents believe it disrupts the rural character of their towns. Mullen requests that the committee work with the Department of Consumer Protection, stakeholders, and municipalities to explore alternative security measures.

[Connecticut Package Stores Association, Inc.\(CSPA\)—Jean Cronin, Executive Director](#) provided comments focused on regulation of THC-infused beverages. CSPA supports the proposed increase in THC from three milligrams to five milligrams per beverage.

They note that recent federal action leaves some uncertainty regarding the future of the infused beverage market, and they would like to be involved in conversations about possible action within Connecticut.

Indian American Package Store Association—Girish Patel, Executive Director

commented on the sections of the bill pertaining to infused beverages. He writes that the state should protect package stores' investment in an Infused Beverage Endorsement by taking stronger enforcement action against unauthorized online sales of infused beverages. Alternatively, he suggests that DCP remove the associated fee.

Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut (WSWC)—Larry Cafero, Executive Director

provides comments only on the portions of the bill pertaining to THC-infused beverages. They propose that THC-infused beverages should be regulated under the same three-tier system and statutory framework that applies to alcoholic beverages in Connecticut.

Rebecca Harvey requests clear and transparent labeling of cannabis products. She argues that transparency strengthens the industry, and clear labeling will promote accountability and encourage best practices. Harvey emphasizes that patients should not have to guess if their medicine has been irradiated or altered.

Crisp Cannabis--Andrew Simonow, President shares his thoughts on the proposed commercial extractor license structure. He proposes that current cannabis license holders be allowed to perform that activity under the existing framework. Simonow expresses support for creating a pathway for hemp farmers to sell minor cannabinoids to the manufacturing market

Insa--Steve Reilly, General Counsel requests clarification regarding "the proposed extraction and sale of hemp." According to Reilly, the hemp industry has been acting illegally and threatening the legal cannabis industry. Insa expresses additional concerns about the on-premises sale of infused beverages.

Connecticut Hemp Industry Association, Jacob Honig, Member of Board of Directors

testified to express general frustration with the current state of Connecticut's hemp market and regulatory framework. According to Honig, a loophole in previous legislation is allowing a Florida company to exclusively sell full-spectrum products in Connecticut, with in-state small businesses being shut out of the market. Their written testimony includes a detailed set of legislative priorities for the state's hemp industry.

Michael Goodenough shares his frustration regarding hemp policy in Connecticut and changes to the 2018 federal Farm Bill. He shares that he is a fifth-generation farmer and that policy changes threaten to "further restrict and economically suffocate the very farmers who have complied with every rule placed before them."

Brant Smith, Connecticut Hemp Farmer states that he is looking to partner with a Social Equity licensee to cultivate cannabis on his hemp farm in Cheshire. He testifies that current social equity policies are preventing him and his partner from establishing this facility. Smith argues that various social equity provisions be altered or removed from statute.

[Norman Plude, Owner, SweetTiva Farms](#) urges the committee to update the seedling definition to better reflect how plants actually grow, protect hemp farmers' ability to sell crops legally, and give automatic relief to medical-era cultivators.

[Kevnesha Boyd, Licensed Professional Counselor](#) provided written testimony that comment on HB 5350. Boyd testifies in support of changing the term "marijuana" to "cannabis" as this update helps "begin to undo stigma that has harmed Black and Brown communities for generations." They state that allowing out-of-state patients to access Connecticut's medical market is essential to preserving access to medication. Boyd urges caution regarding the provisions removing potency limits and altering pharmacist requirements, emphasizing the importance of education and oversight. They testify that Connecticut's cannabis policy "must protect vulnerable minds while honoring patient autonomy."

[Matthew Carter, Dispensary Pharmacist](#) urges the committee to preserve the role of pharmacists in hybrid medical/adult-use dispensary operations to ensure the safe and effective use of cannabis. He opposes any changes in the bill that would eliminate or weaken real-time pharmacist involvement.

[Erin Doolittle, CT Cannawarriors](#) expresses concern that the cannabis regulatory working group might "micromanage" the industry. However, they support ending the regulation that requires hybrid operators to have a pharmacist on site at all times, citing financial burdens. He also supports increasing the permissible amount of THC in infused beverages.

[Rafael Rosario](#) testified to urge the committee to adopt policies that reduce barriers to entry into the state's legal cannabis market. His testimony includes what appear to be AI-generated structural reforms and a "strategic framing memo."

[Lou Rinaldi](#) requests amendments to the current draft that would mandate disclosure for plant adulteration and UV irradiation. He argues that there is too much leeway in the current regulatory and rulemaking process. Rinaldi expresses frustration with the Department of Consumer Protection and argues that a different state agency should oversee the industry.

[Anonymous 52](#) states that they are a disabled veteran who has to take a 10-hour round trip to Maine to obtain the THC concentrate they use as medicine. They urge the committee to strengthen the state's Compassionate Care Program, provide clarification on various aspects of home cultivation, and require dispensaries to stock a broader range of products.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION

[Jason Perillo, State Senator, Connecticut General Assembly](#) is in opposition to the bill and testifies that potency limits should not be increased but rather lowered. He points to the negative effects of cannabis on brain development and outlines the risks of exposure to secondhand smoke. Perillo cites research linking high-potency cannabis and cannabis-induced psychosis, and he characterizes any increase in potency limits as a move in the wrong direction.

[National Alliance on Mental Illness Connecticut \(NAMI\)—Thomas Burr, Public Policy Manager](#) testified in opposition to HB 5350. Burr notes that limits on potency were included in

the original legislation authorizing adult-use cannabis sales because they are a harm reduction measure. His written testimony links to resources detailing increases in product potency over time and studies linking high potency THC with "increased mental illness and addiction." Burr expresses strong opposition to provisions of the raised bill that would have allowed on-site THC beverage consumption. These provisions were removed from the substitute language.

[Scot Kerr](#)'s testimony echoes the points made in NAMI's testimony.

[Joseph Accettullo, Founder & President, New England Craft Cannabis Alliance](#) testified in opposition to the bill because he says it does not address the underlying issues that are affecting the cannabis market in Connecticut today. He argues that there are still a limited number of opportunities for small companies to participate in the regulated market, and he suggests that the committee explore alternative licensing pathways.

[Zygmunt Dembek](#) testified in strong opposition to the bill, providing written testimony that is largely an annotated bibliography highlighting potential psychological harms of cannabis use, such as schizophrenia, anxiety, and depression. He also provides resources documenting increased risk of physical harms such as cancer and respiratory damage.

[Joseph Feuerstein, MD](#) testified in opposition to the bill. He states that as an attending physician at Greenwich Hospital, he has seen a notable increase in cases of schizophrenia in younger patients, which he refers to as an "epidemic" of cannabis induced psychosis. Dr. Feuerstein states that he has also observed an increase in hyperemesis due to cannabis use. He urges the committee to not increase the level of potency for recreational marijuana, as it poses a threat to Connecticut residents.

[Liberation Programs, Inc.--Ingrid Gillespie, Director, Prevention](#) testified in opposition to the bill, echoing previous comments about the negative physical and mental health effects associated with high-potency THC products. Gillespie expresses particular concern regarding provisions of the bill that would have allowed for on-premises consumption of THC products. These provisions were removed from the substitute language.

[Nicole Hampton, Community Advocate](#) testified in strong opposition to HB 5350, echoing previous concerns raised regarding its potential impact on public health.

[Wesley Jenks, President, XpoCanna](#) testified in opposition to the bill. Among other things, his written testimony argues that Connecticut statutes should be changed to allow a company to host a public "cannabis competition." Testimony from [Tyler Semrow, Senior Producer, XCUP & XPOCANN](#) expresses the same sentiments.

[Duncan Markovich, Founder, Better Ways LLC](#) expresses general opposition to the bill's provisions. He details his frustration with multiple aspects of cannabis regulation in Connecticut, and he argues that "more comprehensive conversations" need to happen outside of hearing rooms.

[Elisabeth Ott, Program Director, Guilford Youth Mentoring](#) testified in opposition to the bill, echoing prior concerns regarding public health effects. According to Ott, Connecticut's

rise in wrong way driving "is being investigated as being linked to marijuana legalization." She urges the committee to keep existing harm reduction measures in place.

[Allan Popp, Owner, Popp's Farm, LLC](#) submitted written testimony in opposition to the bill, stating that if this bill is passed, he will most likely have to give up hemp farming.

[Kevin Sabet, PhD, President and CEO, Smart Approaches to Marijuana](#) testified in opposition to the bill, with his comments primarily focusing on the elimination of potency caps. Sabet's testimony emphasizes that as potency increases, public health risks increase. He argues that potency caps are a form of harm reduction and could potentially save lives, and he urges the committee not to give in to pressure from "Big Marijuana."

[Andrew Gerber, President & Medical Director, Silver Hill Hospital](#) testified in opposition to the bill, sharing the story of a patient who was committed to a psychiatric hospital following the use of cannabis. He shares that he is against the removal of potency caps and on-site consumption at restaurants, referring to these provisions as the "engine" of a mental health crisis.

Uzma Zakir, Rph submitted two pieces of testimony on the bill. [One](#) raises concerns about the potential impact of the bill on licensed cannabis delivery operators in the state. [The other](#) cautions the committee that it is "scientifically inaccurate—and legislatively reckless" to regulate all cannabinoids in the same way. They urge the committee to define "synthetic" and "chemically altered" within the text of the bill.

The following individuals testified to express opposition to the bill, sharing stories about individuals in their lives who have been negatively impacted by cannabis use, including associated psychosis. As a result of these lived experiences, they express strong opposition to the removal of potency limits.

[Nancy French](#)
[Monica DiLossi, Mother](#)
[Barbara Evans, Mother](#)
[Kristen Gilliland](#)
[Anonymous 47](#)
[Anonymous 55](#)
[Anonymous 59](#)
[Anonymous 68](#)
[Ann Harvey](#)
[Marietta Homayonpour](#)
[Sarah Hudock](#)
[Kathleen Kelley](#)
[Jennifer Machon](#)
[Micheal Pineau](#)
[Paul Reinhardt](#)
[Marti Roveda](#)
[Lisa Scatena](#)
[Christine Scruggs](#)
[Jacqueline Trueblood](#)
[Amy Wadsworth](#)

[William Wadsworth](#)
[Anonymous 56](#)
[Lee Stewart](#)

The following individuals oppose the bill due to concerns about its impact on public health and the mental and physical health of Connecticut's youth.

[Constance MacDougall](#)
[Brian Quillia](#)
[Anonymous 50](#)
[Anonymous 54](#)
[Anonymous 56](#)
[Lori Hayes-O'Brien](#)
[Katie Gallo](#)
[Melissa McGarry](#)
[Brian Mulroy](#)
[Kiersten Naumann](#)
[Eric Thunem](#)
[Margaret Watt](#)
[JoAnn M Smith, MD](#)
[Anonymous 69](#)
[Anonymous 40](#)

[Josiah Schlee](#) submitted comments largely pertaining to a General Law public hearing held in 2024.

[Anonymous 38](#), [Anonymous 46](#), and [Diana Powers](#) expressed general opposition to the bill.

Reported by: Megan Oros and Betsy Francolino Date: March 23, 2026