

In-Person Testimony of **Juanita Ramos** to the
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Opponent for SB 555 • March 28, 2024

Senate Bill 555: Creating the medical cannabis pilot program act to establish the medical cannabis pilot program for limited cultivation, processing and dispensing of medical cannabis and medical cannabis products.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Juanita Ramos. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed SB 555 legislation, which aims to legalize "medical cannabis" through an extremely restricted Pilot Program. This bill primarily serves the interests of a specific group, namely Kansas Natural Remedies. This narrow group of wealthy, white, powerbrokers no way represents patients or the average Kansan.

The answer to the question we are asking in Kansas is, "Can we get a medical cannabis bill?" Well, the answer is NOT in Senate Bill 555...

As you consider the testimony today, it is crucial to recognize SB 555:

1. Blatantly caters to the desires of a privileged few, disregarding the needs and concerns of the broader population, particularly seniors and marginalized communities. It reeks of elitism and perpetuates the existing power dynamics that prioritize profit over people.
 - A. Moreover, the lack of transparency surrounding the drafting and promotion of Senate Bill 555 is deeply troubling. It reflects a broader pattern of backroom deals and undue influence by wealthy special interests, undermining the principles of democracy and accountability that are supposed to govern our legislative process.
 - B. The interests of the wealthy and well-connected are prioritized over the needs of our communities. It is imperative that we speak out against Senate Bill 555 and demand a legislative agenda that serves the common good, not the narrow interests of a privileged few.
2. Proposes high licensing fees and creates a barrier to entry for the average individual.
3. Lacks adequate regulations on cultivation, production, manufacturing, or formulation.
4. Made disingenuous statements (a) "prohibits smoking or vaping," while (b) it allows for the availability of cannabis flower, which 90% people would buy smokable flower.
5. States a provision for "pharmacists to dispense medical cannabis." Despite its current classification as a Schedule I Drug under federal regulations, it is illegal for pharmacists to handle or dispense medical cannabis. This presents a significant legal conflict and underscores the need for understanding federal rescheduling or comprehensive reform to align state laws

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with federal regulations regarding medical cannabis, and not position our pharmacists in law enforcements cross-hairs as it clearly does in SB 555.

6. A lack of provisions for a Chain-of-Custody process.

7. Illustrates a stark difference between *KNR's hemp cultivation* and medical cannabis cultivation. While hemp is primarily grown for industrial purposes, such as textiles, biofuels, and for Cannabinoid Extraction, Medical Cannabis cultivation requires a more specialized approach tailored to the production of therapeutic compounds for medicinal use. *The failure to distinguish between these two processes underscores the potential risks associated with producing KNR's cannabis-based medicine under SB 555.*

8. The exorbitant cost of \$50,000 license fees serves as a substantial barrier to entry, effectively excluding many of your constituents, including small businesses, mom-and-pop enterprises who may aspire to participate in the medical cannabis industry. This financial burden disproportionately impacts those with limited resources and undermines the goal of fostering a diverse and inclusive marketplace. It's essential to consider more equitable licensing fees to ensure that all interested parties, regardless of their financial means, have a fair opportunity to participate in this emerging industry and not just a wealthy interest group.

9. Overlooks the interests of small businesses, women, ethnic and cultural communities, seniors, and fails to benefit the majority of all Kansas citizens.

10. Increased restrictions to access to medical cannabis for all people, including those who could benefit the most from its therapeutic properties like HIV or AIDS patients.

11. Failure to address the inclusion of certain medical conditions that could significantly benefit from medical cannabis treatment, thereby neglecting the needs of vulnerable populations.

12. How crucial it is to highlight how SB 555 fails to adequately address the concerns of law enforcement, a critical aspect often addressed in most legislation. By overlooking these concerns, SB 555 neglects to provide essential safeguards and guidelines necessary to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of any medical cannabis laws in Kansas.

Having witnessed the varied outcomes in 11 other states where I've been involved, I can attest to experiencing the spectrum from positive impacts to outright disasters. Without a doubt, SB 555 would firmly fall into the latter category. Recognizing the potential ramifications of this legislation, other national organizations have been solicited for their feedback on SB 555. Their insights further illuminates the detrimental effects this bill could have on our community and beyond.

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I am honored to join many voters, Silver Haired Legislature, and countless others as we fully anticipate the introduction of another bill, one that prioritizes the needs and well-being of Kansas citizens over the narrow interests of special groups. It is imperative that any future legislation regarding medical cannabis is crafted with the input and consideration of all stakeholders, ensuring that it serves the best interests of the people of Kansas.

I urge you to join me in opposing Senate Bill 555 and advocating for policies that prioritize equity, justice, and the well-being of all Kansans. Together, we can resist the influence of wealthy powerbrokers and build a more inclusive and equitable future for our state.

Thank you for your attention to these critical concerns regarding SB 555.

I shall stand for questions at the appropriate time.