



Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

January 19, 2011

The Honorable Karen Keiser
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Long-Term Care
Washington State Senate
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chairman Keiser:

I write on behalf of the King County Bar Association to urge your support of SB5073, an act relating to medical use of cannabis. This legislation is scheduled for a hearing before the Committee on Thursday, January 20.

Founded in 1886, KCBA is the largest voluntary bar association in the state of Washington, representing over 14,000 attorneys in King County including attorneys, judges, and law professors. Our mission is to support our diverse membership by promoting a just, collegial, and accessible legal system and profession; working with the judiciary to achieve excellence in the administration of justice; and serving our local community through organized pro bono legal services.

KCBA has engaged in a comprehensive legal analysis and education program about drug policy reform since 2001. We have published numerous reports, studies, and recommendations, hosted expert policy forums and educational programs, and convened leading authorities in the legal and medical professions, educators, and the law enforcement community including judges, defenders, and prosecutors.

Passed in 1998 via citizens' initiative, Washington's Medical Use of Marijuana Act is intended to provide relief to patients suffering terminal or debilitating medical conditions. However, the law currently does not protect even fully compliant patients from the fear of arrest and prosecution since it does not exempt patients from the state's marijuana laws but instead provides them an affirmative defense they can raise at trial. The law also does not provide a workable system for patients to access an adequate, safe, consistent, and secure source of medical marijuana – an issue reported on by the state Department of Health in 2008.

SB 5073 would address these shortcomings by exempting qualifying patients from state criminal laws regarding marijuana and creating a system of licensed, well-regulated producers and dispensers of medical marijuana. These changes would better effect the voters' compassionate intent in passing our medical marijuana law by protecting patients, establishing a safer system for providing them access to medical marijuana, and conserving our public safety resources.

January 19, 2011

Page 2

The King County Bar Association asks for your support in passage of SB5073.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark T. Fordham". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mark T. Fordham
KCBA President

cc: The Honorable Steve Conway, Vice Chair
 The Honorable Randi Becker
 The Honorable Mike Carrell
 The Honorable Adam Kline
 The Honorable Ed Murray
 The Honorable Linda Evans Parlette
 The Honorable Cheryl Pflug
 The Honorable Craig Pridemore