

Testimony of Budr Cannabis

Regarding HB 5350 — *An Act Concerning Cannabis, Hemp and Infused Beverage Regulation*

March 4th, 2026

Senator Maroney, Representative Lemar, Senator Cicarella, Representative Rutigliano, and members of the General Law Committee,

My name is Carl Tirella and I am here on behalf of Budr Cannabis. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding House Bill 5350, legislation that makes several important and thoughtful updates to Connecticut's cannabis regulatory framework.

Budr Cannabis is a Connecticut-licensed Equity Joint Venture with seven adult-use and hybrid locations throughout Connecticut. We support the overall direction of this bill and appreciate the Committee's continued work to refine Connecticut's adult-use cannabis program.

We respectfully offer the following comments and recommendations.

Section 53 — Change of Ownership Flexibility

We are grateful to the committee for provisions in Section 53, which we understand are intended to relax restrictions associated with changes of ownership for all cannabis establishments and establish oversight when transfers are proposed. This intent reflects an important recognition: long-term rigidity in ownership structures can unintentionally harm the very social equity participants the program is designed to support.

As one of the first EJV's to open when adult use cannabis sales were legalized, we are proud of our efforts to further the mission of social equity. With some of our retail operations in place for over a year, the host communities and beneficiaries of our social equity plans are now realizing tangible benefits.

As an EJV, we are held to a seven-year prohibition on changes of ownership which we have long stated is overly restrictive and not in line with realities of the market. Seven years is a very long time in any industry, and much can change. If a venture isn't doing well, seven years is a significant length of time for a person to be locked into an operation that is struggling. On the flip side, if a business is doing well, why should a social equity owner be prohibited from choosing to cash out at a time most advantageous financially?

A change in this policy would not and should not change the overarching commitment to social equity that we and other industry operators maintain. We would still adhere to social equity plans with community give-backs, social equity hiring requirements, workforce development requirements, and tax revenues would still be contributed to host communities. We would be happy to share specifics about those efforts relative to Budr locations. We also want to emphasize that we believe this should be an option, not a requirement, and any individual who wants to maintain their ownership status for any length of time should be allowed to do so.

Allowing responsible ownership flexibility would improve access to capital, enable business sustainability, provide realistic exit pathways for social equity entrepreneurs, and encourage continued investment in Connecticut's regulated market.

Requested Technical Fixes

While Section 53 moves policy in the right direction, we respectfully note that other areas of statute still retain references to the original seven-year prohibition, creating potential inconsistencies and uncertainty. We recommend that the Committee conduct conforming statutory revisions across all relevant sections; and ensure that ownership flexibility is applied uniformly throughout the cannabis statutes.

Lastly, while we support an oversight structure for changes of ownership which ensures all parties are acting at will and appropriate protections are in place, we have some concerns with specifics in this section which may place further restrictions on such transfers rather than reduce barriers as we understand is the intent. We would be happy to work with the committee and other stakeholders in order to balance flexibility with social equity protections.

Section 60-Support for Modernization of Pharmacist Requirements

We appreciate provisions in section 60 which loosen existing pharmacist requirements for retail and hybrid cannabis establishments. We are grateful for the committee's consideration of operational realities that have emerged since legalization.

Last year's law (Public Act 25-166) intended to ease the financial and operational burden of pharmacist coverage for hybrid retailers by reducing the mandatory on-site hours and allowing for telehealth consultation coverage when a pharmacist is not physically present. Despite that reform, current regulations, adopted so far only as policies and procedures, still impose strict ratios (e.g., no more than three dispensary technicians per supervising pharmacist and onerous supervision standards) and, in effect, retain significant barriers to operational flexibility. Operators report that the disproportionate emphasis on rigid staffing ratios increases labor costs and limits access rather than supporting patient care. While this bill takes a step to remove some barriers, this ratio requirement remains unchanged, and we respectfully request that the Committee revisit this requirement.

Support for Additional Sections of HB 5350

We would like to express our support for the following sections of the bill and again offer to be a resource to the committee as you work to refine these extensive proposals.

- Modifications in section 67 to relax restrictions on potency and packaging which would significantly enhance our ability to compete with neighboring states.
- Provisions throughout which would require agency policies and procedures to be shared with the General Law Committee.
- Provisions enabling the sale of infused beverages with higher allowable THC levels.

Thank you again for continued efforts to listen and respond to industry stakeholders as we all navigate a new industry. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with legislators and regulators to ensure Connecticut's cannabis industry remains safe, equitable, and economically sustainable.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,