



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 25, 2022

Via email only

Hon. Norm Major, Chair
And Members of the House Ways and Means Committee
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 1598 (Legalization of Marijuana)

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to respectfully register our **opposition to HB 1598**.

Over the years, the Diocese of Manchester has consistently opposed proposals to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. Our position in this regard is based on our view that the enactment of these sorts of bills would be contrary to the common good. Of course, the common good is not just a religious concept; Part 1 Article 1 of the New Hampshire Constitution expressly states that government is instituted “for the general good”, and Part 1 Article 3 recognizes that “the protection of others” is a foundational purpose of society. I hope that you will review HB 1598 in the light of these core principles.

To that end, we respectfully suggest that in its deliberations on HB 1598 the Committee consider the following questions:

- 1. Will the passage of this bill protect our youth and improve family life?**
- 2. Will the passage of this bill improve the public health?**
- 3. Will the passage of this bill improve communities?**
- 4. Will the passage of this bill make people better workers and strengthen New Hampshire’s business workforce?**

In our view, the answer to all these questions is decidedly “no”.

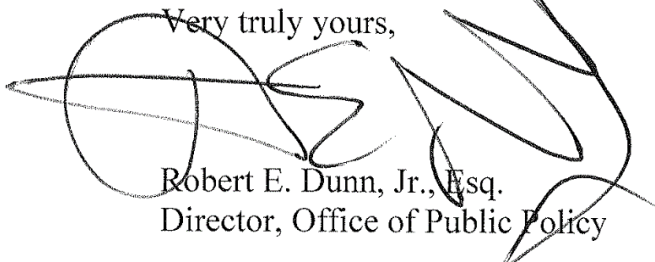
Our state continues to struggle with a substance misuse crisis that has cost the lives of thousands of people and devastated the lives and health of countless more of our neighbors. Catholic ministries around the state are seeing the effects of this first-hand. Moreover, as the Fiscal Note states, the Division of State Police assumes that passage of this bill would likely result in an increase in things like impaired drivers and black market sales, and that an increase in marijuana use would lead to increases in crimes such as robbery, burglary, and theft.

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We are convinced that any revenues that might come to the State from the passage of this legislation will never be able to outweigh the financial costs -and even more, the social costs – that would follow. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to vote ITL on HB 1598.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several large, overlapping loops and strokes, positioned above the typed name and title.

Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy