



Jewish Social Policy Action Network

Progressive voices for a healthy democracy

May 13, 2009

VIA facsimile to (215) 924-8480

The Honorable Mark B. Cohen
128 Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202202
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2202

Re: HB 1393 – Medical Marijuana Legislation

Dear Representative Cohen:

I am writing on behalf of the JSPAN Board of Directors to advise you that our organization heartily endorses HB 1393, which would legalize the use of marijuana for limited medical purposes.

In deciding to endorse this bill, we were substantially guided by the thinking of several rabbis on our Board whose training and experience represent the Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist traditions of Jewish thought.

As you know, Jewish law teaches us that the alleviation of pain and suffering is a religious obligation. Since ancient times, Jewish religious authorities have ruled that alleviating pain takes priority over many other religious obligations. The imperative to heal and to reduce human suffering is itself a reflection of Judaism's belief in the sanctity of human life and its incalculable value.

Extensive medical literature clearly documents that marijuana is an effective analgesic for sufferers of nausea related to chemotherapy, appetite and weight loss related to AIDS, migraine headaches, Alzheimer's, muscle spasms, fibromyalgia, arthritic pain, glaucoma and other conditions. The limited legalization of marijuana for medical purposes would help alleviate unnecessary pain and suffering. Pennsylvania should join the other states that have already permitted such use.

Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Pasek
President

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Vice President
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