

Testimony of Jesse Roedts

Before the Pennsylvania Senate Transportation Committee

September 21, 2021

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen of the Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Jesse Roedts and I am a medical cannabis patient here in Pennsylvania. I would like to thank Chairs Langerholc and Sabatina for this opportunity to address the Committee.

I would like to share my experience with the current medical cannabis and DUI laws here in Pennsylvania. In September of 2018 I was stopped at a DUI checkpoint conducted by the Pennsylvania State Police. During the stop the troopers were made aware that I was a legal medical marijuana card holder. I made the officers aware multiple times that I was not impaired and all of my medication was legal. Nonetheless my vehicle was searched and my legal medication was seized. The troopers conducted field sobriety tests, and I was then taken for a blood draw at a local hospital. During the arrest I was told that any trace amount of THC in my blood is considered a DUI in PA. Further, it did not matter if I was a legal medical cannabis patient or that I was not impaired. A few months later I was informed that I was being charged with a third tier controlled substance DUI due to the presence of Carboxy THC in my blood. I was not cited for any motor vehicle violations. After hiring an attorney I learned that if convicted I was facing mandatory jail time, mandatory fines and court costs, probation supervision, an ignition interlock requirement and a driver's license suspension. These consequences would have negatively affected my personal and professional life.

The affidavit in support of my arrest indicated that I failed roadside sobriety tests. However, at the preliminary hearing the arresting trooper testified under oath that the only reason they removed me from my vehicle was due to the fact they knew I had a medical cannabis card. The trooper admitted that he knew he could arrest me for the mere presence of non-psychoactive metabolites and that is why he targeted me for a DUI. During the hearing evidence was supplied to the court to prove that all the cannabis was legally obtained and possessed. The video evidence of the field sobriety test was provided to the court as well. Upon reviewing the video, the court was made aware that I showed no signs of impairment. After hearing the testimony of the arresting officer and reviewing the evidence provided the DUI charge was withdrawn by the Commonwealth. This however did not end the negative consequences of the charges.

When I was charged with the DUI my name was in the local newspaper and multiple online news sites. I work a full and part time job as a music instructor and fire inspector to support my family. Due to the charges being published I had to reveal my employer that I was a medical cannabis patient. I felt embarrassed that I had to reveal personal medical information just to clear my name so I would not be terminated from both my jobs. Since I am a teacher at a music school multiple parents and administrators also saw the article. I had to make them aware that I was a legal patient and was not impaired. Once again I had to reveal personal medical information to not lose employment. The consequences of the DUI charge would have been career ending. Due to

this and fact that I acquired thousands of dollars of legal fees just to defend myself, I feel the entire incident was an abuse of my rights and privacy.

When the medical cannabis laws were passed in Pennsylvania a critical detail was missed. That detail was DUI reform for card holders. The state legalized medical cannabis then turned hundreds of thousands of patients into potential criminals. Reforming this law will allow the proper protections that patients deserve. It will also protect rights of medical cannabis patients here in Pennsylvania. I know I am one of many patients who have have suffered due to the way the current law is written. I hope my story can help affect a positive change to the current laws. Thank you very much for your time.

Thank you,

Jesse Roedts