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Community Issue Speech

**Legalizing Medical Marijuana in the CNMI**

 Marijuana collectively refers to the different parts of a hemp plant, which include the leaves, stem, and flowering tops. There are male and female hemp plants, both of which contain psychoactive substances. These psychoactive substances are a chemical called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol or THC (Jaffe). This THC chemical is usually found in the flowering tops of the plant and can be extracted for medical purposes. Legalizing medical marijuana can be a great source of medical treatment for our people here in the CNMI and a potential source of revenue for our government.

Medical marijuana is marijuana as recommended by a doctor in the treatment of a medical condition. The term medical marijuana refers to using the whole, unprocessed marijuana plant or its basic extracts to treat symptoms of illnesses and other medical conditions. In fact, ladies and gentlemen, medical marijuana legislation has been approved in more than half of all U.S. states. 29 U.S. states have legalized marijuana use for medical reasons and purposes. So, shouldn’t the CNMI jump on board the legalization of marijuana for medical use like the 29 states who see the potential it has in helping its citizens with medical treatments for illnesses and conditions.

These examples include: Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, Crohn’s disease, glaucoma, nausea, muscle spasms, pain, mental health conditions like schizophrenia and PTSD, eating disorders like appetite loss and anorexia, multiple sclerosis, and the Wasting Syndrome. There are even historical accounts to various civilizations and societies that used marijuana for medical purposes. The first records of marijuana being used medically come from China, as far back as 2737 BC, when a pharmacologist and Emperor Shennong wrote a medical book that cited marijuana as a treatment for a variety of conditions, such as absent-mindedness, rheumatism, constipation, and gout. Emperor Shennong even conducted his research on himself. The ancient Greeks used cannabis on their animals. Battle-wounded horses had their wounds dressed with cannabis after battle, and even the ancient Greeks used cannabis on themselves to treat inflammation, ear pain, and more. Amazing what marijuana can do to the many who are suffering from a medical illness or condition.

Medicinal marijuana can greatly help individuals in our community who are suffering or experiencing a severe medical condition. Medicinal marijuana can help reduce anxiety, reduce inflammation, relieve pain, relax tight muscles in individuals with MS, stimulate or improve appetite, lessening the nausea and vomiting that people with cancer experience, and even kill cancer cells or at least slow tumor growth. Just the name itself, “medicinal marijuana” tells you why legislation NEEDS to be passed – marijuana use for the medical treatment of illnesses and conditions.

 Marijuana is a natural product from plants. It is not a man-made drug, such as methamphetamine, cocaine, or heroine, all of which have much more health risks. Marijuana is all from plants, and has been used all throughout the world for centuries before it became an issue and an “illegal” drug. Rumors of long-term marijuana use affecting the human brain has yet to be proven. According to the *American Journal of Addictions*, a study was conducted that proved no significant or alarming difference between heavy marijuana smokers and non-marijuana smokers (Merino).

 Although more study and research still need to be conducted on marijuana, I think that it should be legalized here in the CNMI. Legalizing marijuana in the CNMI will help our people who are suffering from chronic pain, especially now when our healthcare is greatly inadequate and prescription drug prices are ridiculously high.