



## DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

January 24, 2023

The Honorable John Hunt, Chair  
And Members of the House Commerce Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

**Re: HB 639 (Legalization of Marijuana)**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As 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 639, which legalizes marijuana**. (We take no position with respect to the sections of the bill that only concern the corporate form of alternative treatment centers.)

The Catholic Church considers that, although the Church and the political community are autonomous from one another, they can and should work together cooperatively to advance the good of all, since both entities, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same people. It is in that vein that we offer these comments on HB 639.

Over the years, the Diocese of Manchester has consistently opposed proposals to legalize the recreational use of marijuana because, in our view, the common good would be harmed by the passage of this type of legislation. The principle of the common good is not just a religious concept, of course; as you know, Part 1 Article 1 of the New Hampshire Constitution states that government is “instituted for the general good”, and Part 1 Article 3 expressly recognizes that “the protection of others” is a foundational purpose of society. We hope that you will look at this legislation in the light of those provisions.

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. With that perspective in mind, we urge you not to pass a bill that would legalize yet another drug that potentially harms those who are most in need of our protection and that would be the cause of unnecessary financial costs to the State of New Hampshire, local governments, and New Hampshire families.



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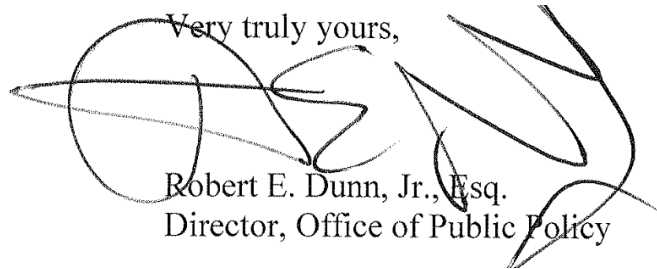
As you review this legislation, we respectfully ask you to consider the following essential questions:

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

In our view, the answer to all these questions is decidedly “no”. Therefore, we think that any revenues that might come to the State from the enactment of this sort of legislation are sure to be outweighed by the financial costs -and even more, the social costs – of the measure. Accordingly, we respectfully ask you to protect the common good by voting to recommend ITL on HB 639.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. E. Dunn, Jr.', written over the typed name and title.

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