



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

January 17, 2024

Hon. John Hunt, Chair
And Members of the House Commerce Committee
Legislative Office Building
Concord NH 03301

Re: HB 1633 (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 1633**, which would legalize marijuana.

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 are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same people. It is in that vein that we offer these comments.

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”. We hope that you will look at this legislation in the light of that foundational principle.

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 which would be the cause of unnecessary financial costs to the State of New Hampshire, local governments, and New Hampshire families.



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

The information for the HB 1633 fiscal note that was supplied by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Safety (which according to the FN was based on the legalization experiences of Colorado and Illinois) includes some instructive examples concerning the types of problems that are likely to flow from the legalization of marijuana in this state.

Thus, as you conduct your review of this legislation, we respectfully suggest that the following questions must be answered:

- 1. Will the passage of this law protect our youth and improve family life?**
- 2. Will the passage of this law improve 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”. We think that the financial and social costs of this proposal are sure to outweigh whatever revenue might come to the State as a result of enacting this sort of legislation. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to recommend ITL on HB 1633.

Thank you as always for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Dunn, Jr.", written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

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