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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

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**Testimony Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies 2023 Member Day Hearing**

Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, thank you for your consideration. Yesterday, March 9, 2023, I met with a former member of SEAL Team 6. His story echoes that of many fellow veterans. He was in a helicopter crash that resulted in serious injuries. After several surgeries, he found himself addicted to opioids that he used for pain and sleep management. He slowly recovered from his addiction with the help of cannabis derivatives, which he continues to use today as he heals from his injuries. However, he remains unable to discuss with his Veteran's Administration (VA) doctor about his use of cannabis out of fear of the repercussions.

Thousands of veterans are turning to cannabis as an alternative to the addictive drugs frequently used to manage pain. Yet, many of our most honorable citizens are forced into clandestine self-medication because the VA is hamstrung from discussing this essential treatment option.

My proposed restriction on how the VA may use its funds will allow VA doctors—in states where cannabis is legal—to discuss cannabinoids as a treatment option with their patients, to fill out paperwork that authorizes its medicinal use, and to take into consideration such cannabinoid products when choosing what other medical options may be appropriate for their patients.

The nation is turning a page on the way we think about cannabis. It has become a key part of the medical apparatus, offering many law-abiding Americans a low-cost, safe option for pain and sleep management.

To say those who fight for our nation cannot deal with their pain with cannabinoids is unjust and unfair. To force veterans who are trying to heal from injuries to lie on forms and self-medicate is gross misfeasance by the members of this House. It is time for a change.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with the subcommittee to bring this valuable medical option to millions of veterans.

Sincerely,



Brian Mast
Member of Congress