

## **Dr. Junella Chin – Senate Hearing Testimony**

Good afternoon, all. Thank you to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Cannabis Subcommittee Chair Jeremy Cooney, Finance Chair Liz Krueger, Agriculture Chair Michelle Hinchey and Government Operations Chair James Skoufis for the invitation to present testimony today.

I stand before you today in my role as the co-chair of the Cannabis Advisory Board, the Chair of the Health, Safety and Research Subcommittee, and more broadly, as an integrative medicine specialist with over 15 years of clinical experience. I bring a unique perspective on cannabis-based therapies that incorporates the lessons of data science, crowd-sourced experiential knowledge, and individualized treatment strategies. Through my work as an advisor of several cannabis start-up companies, consulting for industry leadership, speaking at conferences internationally, and as an author, I have created medical cannabis protocols for the industry and internationally accepted methods for cannabinoid formulations, research, education, and training programs and I have direct patient care experience working as a registered practitioner in New York State's Medical Cannabis Program. I've seen the benefit of medical cannabis firsthand and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the profound impact cannabis can have on patient outcomes.

*Here is an email I received last week.*

*Dear Dr. Chin,*

*I am a single parent of a 21-year-old son named Jackson who is diagnosed with autism and epilepsy. All of the kids my son grew up with have graduated college, started new jobs. Some of them are married, starting their own families, while others are traveling the world. I look on with envy and sadness. These parents have freedom, and their kids are independent enough to start their own lives.*

*On good days, I spend my time playing in the sandbox, stacking alphabet blocks, lining up matchbox cars just like we did when Jackson was three years old. On the bad days, he endures 30 or more absence seizures, and I'm busy patching up the drywall, fixing broken doors and windows from his destructive tantrums. I no longer have a healthy social life. I no longer respond to party invitations, weddings, or birthdays.*

*I spend my free time researching various therapies and medications that might give Jackson a little peace and a better quality of life. I live in fear of his uncontrollable, unpredictable violent outbursts. I stare at the bite marks and the bruises from fighting off Jackson; we can't go on living like this.*

*Jackson's neurologist and psychiatrist stated that we had exhausted all of the pharmaceutical medications. I asked them about medical cannabis. I didn't want to experiment blindly on my own or go into a random cannabis shop. So, they referred me to your clinic. Please help us.*

The situation is truly heart-wrenching. Our clinic regularly receives hundreds of emails like this one. Our course of action is clear: we will continue working closely with the OCM to strengthen New York's medical and adult use programs. We need to continue to ensure patient access while upholding safety and compliance, health equity and protect the most vulnerable individuals in our community.

As the co-chair of the Cannabis Advisory Board, I'm here to represent a diverse group of cannabis industry stakeholders and subject matter experts as we begin the herculean task of advising the Office of Cannabis Management both on the dissemination of the Community Grants Reinvestment Fund, and the roll out of the adult-use, medical and cannabinoid hemp industries. We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have had a strong start in researching and understanding the issues ahead of us as we work to develop the processes that will be used by the Advisory Board for decades to come.

Lastly, as the Chair of the Health, Safety and Research Subcommittee, I'd be remiss if I didn't also touch upon the importance of funding and prioritizing cannabis research. OCM has created the Cannabis Research License and under that structure, I am envisioning a future where New York State is the cornerstone of cannabis research, where we work to answer the questions related to the cannabis plant and cannabis medicine that so many others have sought. But we need support from the Legislature and the State to ensure these efforts receive the prioritization and funding needed to truly make an impact and change lives. I'd welcome more discussion in this arena as well.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.