From: Alina Zheng <alinazheng4990@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, December 19, 2025 9:04 PM

To: cm@keithself.com

Subject: A Plea to Support Medical Cannabis Through the Compassionate Use Program

Dear Representative Self,

My name is Alina Zheng, and I am a junior student at Allen High School. I am writing to express my support for expanding the Compassionate Use Program in Texas. As someone whose family has suffered the negative effects of the limited availability of pain medications in the past, I believe that more patients should have access to this safe and effective form of treatment.

I grew up in the same home as my grandfather. Because our bedrooms were side-by-side and we shared a small bathroom, I knew his habits by heart—the quiet rituals of morning tea, the stories he told while teaching me the history and craft of Chinese knots, and our common conversations exchanging parts of the culture we grew up with. Tea was exchanged for American Sprite, and donuts were replaced with Chinese fried mantou. That closeness is why his illness, and especially the pain he suffered from, marked me so deeply.

After he was diagnosed with lung cancer, repeated rounds of radiation damaged his nerves. Though we tried alleviating his pain through medication, the traditional forms of pain medication did not work well, while still causing side effects like dizziness and nausea. Everyday movements like standing up from bed, walking a few steps, even simple bowel movements could trigger waves of agony. I often heard his low groans through the wall, as sometimes the pain made him cry and sweat from the effort of simply using the restroom. It is hard to describe what it does to a child to hear a person she loves suffer like that and to be able to do so little to help.

His pain reshaped our entire household. My grandmother, who cared for him day and night, grew anxious and exhausted from listening to his groans and feeling powerless; the stress shortened her patience and frayed family tempers. It was during this time that my father learned about the potential of marijuana, and though he ultimately decided against procuring some medical marijuana to attempt to alleviate my grandfather's pain, as medical marijuana was still illegal at that time, my father still carries the guilt from not being able to do anything to help his own father in his struggles. In the end, when my grandfather died, it was a blessing for both him and the entire family, as before his death, he had told us, "What's more terrible than death is living in such pain."

Research has shown that medical cannabis can significantly improve the quality of life for individuals suffering from chronic pain. After learning about the potential of medical

cannabis, I was inspired to dive deeper into its potential uses, going so far as to write a research paper on its effects that is currently pending publication. Furthermore, I have recently started a new initiative to spread awareness about this issue through AI video making. Using various AI technologies, I crafted a video that told the story of my family's struggles and then submitted it to various AI and video competitions, ultimately placing third in the WAICY 2025 AI video art competition. My goal by competing in these competitions is not to simply spread awareness amongst the judges of my video, but upon winning, gain a platform for more people to see my story and thus become aware of the fight for medical cannabis legalization.

While I am not saying that medical cannabis could have solved all of our problems at that time, the fact stands that had our family had the option, perhaps even just one person could have been saved from the guilt of inaction. On the more optimistic side, access to medical cannabis could have potentially let my grandfather live his last days in peace. This is why I urge you to support legislation that expands patient eligibility, increases access to medical cannabis, and allows physicians greater freedom in prescribing this treatment. If this kind of legislation could help even just one family like mine, I believe that it is the kind of legislation that is worth the support of dedicated and altruistic individuals such as you.

Thank you for your time and dedication to serving our community.

Sincerely,
Alina Zheng