

Good morning, everyone. My name is **Bryn Spejcher**, and I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to speak to you today. This marks my first press conference following my criminal trial. Before I delve into the details, I want to make it clear that I come before you as a nonpartisan individual. My sole purpose today is to shed light on a matter of public health, sharing my personal journey, and highlighting the devastating consequences of high-potency marijuana.

Growing up in suburban, Illinois, I experienced a childhood filled with love and stability in a Christian household alongside my parents, brothers and a lot of pets. I engaged in various activities such as dance, girl scouts, art, sports, music, church and much more. Adding a challenge, I was diagnosed with bilateral severe, sensorineural hearing loss by the age of 3, and have utilized binaural hearing aids since the age of 4. Being the only child with hearing loss in our public-school system lead me to work hard just to listen and hear to catch up in sound recognition, speech and language development for the four years I lost.

Following my academic pursuits, culminating in a doctorate in Audiology from Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine, I embarked on a career path aimed at helping others with hearing impairments. In 2017, I began working as a Senior Audiologist in the Thousand Oaks, California area with UCLA Health, eager to make a difference in the lives of patients.

The unspeakable, tragedy struck on Sunday of Memorial Day weekend in 2018 in California, resulting in the death of my friend, Chad O'Melia, due to a severe cannabis-induced psychosis that I experienced after consuming, unknowingly, a potent dose of marijuana. This event plunged me into a period of profound grief, depression, fear and introspection as I awaited trial. The subsequent legal proceedings led to my conviction of involuntary manslaughter,

accompanied by three years' probation, restitution, a mandate of 52 domestic violence classes, and to contribute 100 hours of community service to raise awareness and educate about the dangers of marijuana. Also, I want to express that I wouldn't be here sharing my story today without the Ventura County, California police; their intervention literally saved my life. My aim is to dedicate thousands of hours, possibly for the remainder of my life, driven by the profound understanding of how a seemingly ordinary evening, with a friend, resulted in a tragic loss and life threatening, enduring wounds. This harrowing experience, stemming from unregulated, falsely perceived "harmless" cannabis, has underscored the urgent need for government regulation, awareness and education.

The years since that life altering night, has been one of immense pain and regret. Expert professionals from the prosecution and defense at my trial, confirmed and agreed that the incident stemmed from a severe cannabis-induced psychosis, a condition exacerbated by the high potency of THC in the substance that was given to me without my knowledge. I want to emphasize that I had no prior history of mental health issues or violent behavior. Like many others, I was **unaware** of the potential risks associated with high-potency THC. I am no one special. This can happen to anyone.

The normalization of potent strains of marijuana has perpetuated the misconception that cannabis is inherently harmless. However, this story serves as a stark reminder of the dangers lurking within. The technique of "milking" or "layering" a bong, which I unknowingly was pressured into, can significantly amplify the effects of THC, leading to catastrophic, psychological reactions in naïve, susceptible individuals. I wish this on no one. My hope is that sharing this story, I can prevent others from experiencing similar tragedies.

Every day for the past 6 years, my heart aches for Chad, his family and loved ones, as well as my own. Both families have been irreversibly impacted by this horrifying incident. Not a day goes by that I do not grapple with the pain and sorrow caused by that unimaginable night. If I had known more about the potential dangerous and deadly effects of high-potency marijuana, this tragedy would not have occurred. I am deeply concerned about the cases of other people who have lost their lives or have been severely impacted, and having no idea that cannabis could have played a role. It's a sobering reminder of the urgent need for awareness and education surrounding the risks associated with high-potency THC.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.