



**To: Members of the Judiciary Committee**

**Re: Testimony In Opposition To S.B. # 487 An Act Concerning The Legalization, Taxation And Regulation Of The Retail Sale And Recreational Use Of Marijuana And Concerning The Production And Regulation Of Hemp**

CT SAM (Smart Approaches to Marijuana) is the state chapter of a national organization that advocates for sensible marijuana policies based on scientific research. The national SAM organization recently completed a report, "Lessons Learned from Marijuana Legalization in Four US States and DC". Five years of data have been collected since Colorado and Washington legalized marijuana in 2012. Oregon, Alaska and the District of Columbia followed in 2015. Below we provide a summary of key points of that report. The full report can be found at this link: <https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SAM-Digital-C-4.pdf>. As you consider various marijuana legalization bills, please give careful consideration of these facts.

- 1) **ADVERSE EFFECTS ON HEALTH OUTCOMES** (pp 10-11). Data shows there is a clear correlation between frequency of use and potency of marijuana and mental health issues such as psychosis, depression, anxiety, suicidality, brain development and cognitive operations, and addiction. Studies have shown that marijuana use increases the likelihood of misuse of opioid drugs. Much like tobacco, marijuana use has been shown to increase the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular problems including lung disease, hypertension, heart attacks and strokes. Marijuana is addictive. With addiction comes withdrawal symptoms that often mimic the effects of the flu or worse.
- 2) **COMMERCIALIZATION: A GROWING CONCERN** (pp 12-13) Big Tobacco is now being replaced by Big Marijuana. Like the tobacco industry, marijuana is often sold in forms that are deliberately targeting youth and young adults – cookies, ice cream, candy, and even soda. Edible marijuana makes up 20-50% of marijuana sold in the states where it is legalized. States have discovered that it is not uncommon for marijuana products to be mislabeled, providing inaccurate THC concentration levels and other ingredients. Further, communities in these states have been overwhelmed with marijuana products and paraphernalia. In Colorado, there are more marijuana stores than McDonald's and Starbucks combined.
- 3) **MARIJUANA-RELATED POISON CONTROL CALLS, HOSPITALIZATIONS, AND ER VISITS** (pp14-17) In states where marijuana use has become legalized there has been a dramatic increase in calls to local poison control centers. The state of Washington has experienced a 70% increase in calls when comparing three years prior and after legalization. The legalization of marijuana has put increased demand on emergency room services. The experience of one Oregon hospital is not atypical. In 2012 it had 229 marijuana-related ER visits, in 2015 that number had jumped to 2,251.
- 4) **IMPACTS ON YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS** (pp18-21) In these states and DC, youth clearly have increased access to marijuana given the increased use of youth vaping marijuana and ingesting edibles. Studies have shown that where there is a marijuana



dispensary nearby, there is significant youth use of marijuana. In these states, youth use of marijuana is 30% higher than the national youth rate overall. Marijuana is addictive. It causes structural changes to the developing brain, lowers IQ scores, and can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression, increasing risk of suicide.

- 5) **BLACK MARKET ACTIVITY AND CRIME** (pp 22-27) The legalization of marijuana has increased, not decreased, marijuana black market activity. Law enforcement have been busy interdicting illegal production and sales throughout these four states and the District of Columbia. There is a correlation between where marijuana use is legal and increased crime rates. Alaska has moved from 21<sup>st</sup> in the country for property thefts to 3<sup>rd</sup>, and from 31<sup>st</sup> in burglaries to 14<sup>th</sup> after legalization. Citations to young adults have increased significantly given their misunderstanding of “pot is legal” does not mean that it can be used publicly.
- 6) **IMPACTS OF LEGALIZATION ON COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS** (pp 23- 31) Like the tobacco industry, the marijuana industry is disproportionately targeting people of color, low income, and a variety of vulnerable populations. Many marijuana dispensaries are located in African-American and Hispanic communities, as well as low income in communities, increasing the likelihood of marijuana use and all the associated risks. These communities also experience a higher percentage of youth marijuana arrests. Between 2012-2014, the percentage of African American or Hispanic youth arrests in Colorado increased from 29% to 58%.
- 7) **IMPACT OF LEGALIZATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT** (pp32-36) Large scale production of marijuana typically involves spraying of pesticides emitting poisons into the environment. The manufacturing of marijuana requires significant energy usage. In Colorado, indoor marijuana production accounts for 2% of the state’s electricity usage. Marijuana use has been responsible for an increase in worker absenteeism and lower productivity. These states have also seen an increase in the number of vehicle crashes and fatalities due to marijuana impaired driving. According to AAA, the number of drugged-driving fatalities doubled in the state of Washington after marijuana was legalized.

CT SAM is opposed to the legalization of marijuana. The evidence and research based data contained in the full report unequivocally demonstrates the negative consequences and risks associated with marijuana legalization. Connecticut does not need to repeat the perils of Colorado, Washington, Alaska, Oregon and the District of Columbia. Let us learn from their mistakes. Vote NOT to support the legalization of marijuana in Connecticut.

Thank you.

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