

INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF AND ADDICTION TO MARIJUANA BY ADULTS AND KIDS

TO: MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 1138 RELATED TO LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA.

My name is William Huhn, a resident of Guilford, Ct. 06437. I am a member of CT Smart Approaches to Marijuana, a statewide coalition opposed to legalization of retail MJ. I am also a member of Guilford DAY, a local coalition committed to prevention of teen abuse of alcohol and drugs in Guilford. This is testimony in opposition to SB 1138.

I completely agree with former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg who pointed out that as America struggles with an epidemic of drug use and overdosing, it is “trying to legalize another addictive narcotic, which is perhaps the stupidest thing anybody has ever done.”

In theory, legalization could be a good thing, especially if it led to improved public education in distressed municipalities. In practice, legalization will cause further substantial damage to all communities, including our distressed municipalities, due to the substantial increase in consumption of a drug that adversely affects public health. There is a strong medical and scientific consensus on the health risks associated with marijuana consumption. If you are not aware of this, please read the testimony of the Connecticut State Medical Society and the scientists who submit testimony to you. The doctors and scientists are strongly opposed to legalization, and I suspect they absolutely agree with Mayor Bloomberg.

1) 85% INCREASE IN MARIJUANA CONSUMPTION IN COLORADO 2014 – 2017

Have any of you determined how much consumption will increase following legalization?

It is highly likely to be 85% or more, based on a report by the Colorado Department of Revenue. SEE: *Market Size and Demand for Marijuana in Colorado, 2017 Market Update*, [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/MED%20Demand%20and%20Market%20%20Study%20%20082018.pdf](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/MED%20Demand%20and%20Market%20Study%20%20082018.pdf).

Colorado Legal Adult Consumption

2014	131 Metric Tons
2017	209 Metric Tons
2017	340 Metric Tons – Legal Regulated Production
2017	131 Metric Tons – Gap Between Legal Adult Consumption & Regulated Production
2017	? Metric Tons -- + Black Market Marijuana sold in Colorado

The report estimates that Colorado adult marijuana consumption increased from 131 metric tons in 2014 to 209 metric tons in 2017. The huge increase is not surprising, considering the impact of commercialization, with increased access and advertising.

It is interesting that regulated production in 2017 was actually 340 metric tons, although legal consumption by adults was only 208 metric tons. The 131 Metric Ton difference was illegal consumption by teens, illegal exports across the state borders, and perhaps increased inventories by retailers and users. Even worse, the gap was actually much wider than 131 metric tons, since the report ignores any estimates of illegal black market sales, which were substantial.

Note that the increase in consumption between 2014 and 2017 did not create a windfall for the state tax revenues, because at the same time, the sales prices fell 62%.

2) 85% INCREASE IN ADULT MARIJUANA ADDICTION IN COLORADO IN 2014 – 2017.

3)

2014	111,550 “Heavy Users”
2017	206,000 “Heavy Users”

The Report also shows an 85% increase in adult marijuana addiction in the state since legalization. In 2014, there were 111,550 adult “heavy users”, a euphemism for “addicts”. At the end of 2017, Colorado had 206,000 adult “heavy users” of marijuana. Virtually all the “heavy users” are addicted, using marijuana every day, in large quantities. In 2017, the “heavy users” consumed 82% of the marijuana used in Colorado. So in three years, Colorado added 94,000 people who suffer the consequences of marijuana addiction. The dollar costs of this additional addiction to the state are substantial. In addition, consider the life disruption of the 94,000 new addicts, the impact on their parents, their spouses, their children, and their workplace. And consider the people who will move on from marijuana addiction to other, even more damaging substances, such as cocaine, crystal meth and heroin. The social costs of commercializing marijuana far outweigh, both in dollars and pain, the potential tax revenue from legalization.

Note that this increased addiction will occur in distressed municipalities just as much or more as in the remainder of the state, since proposed legislation hopes to focus retail sales in distressed communities.

Teen Use- The states that have legalized retail marijuana have much higher use by teens than those which have not.

PAST MONTH USAGE 12-17 years old, 2016, 2017 Source SAMHSA.gov, National Survey on Drug Use and Health

10 States with highest teen 30 day MJ use

- 1) Vermont – **Legalized** 10.75%
- 2) Oregon - **Legalized** -10.35%
- 3) Maine –**Legalized** -9.88%
- 4)New Mexico – Med MJ -9.74%
- 5) RI - Med MJ -9.49%
- 6) Colo – **Legalized** – 9.02%
- 7) Washington (state)- **Legalized** -8.96%
- 8) Mass.- **Legalized** - 8.91%
- 9) Alaska – **Legalized**- 8.84%
- 10)Nevada- **Legalized** – 8.82%

10 States with lowest teen 30 day MJ use

- 41) West Virginia -5.45%
- 42) Georgia – 5.39%
- 43)Oklahoma -5.38%
- 44)New Jersey Med. MJ – 5.16%
- 45)Kansas – 5.16%
- 46) Iowa – 5.11%
- 47) Mississippi – 5.05%
- 48) No. Dakota – 4.99%
- 49) Texas - 4.86%
- 50) Utah – 4.71%

One of the saddest aspects of the legalization movement is the promotion of marijuana abuse as a risk-free, “recreational” activity, a “healthy” one. The industry ignores the substantial body of research on the brain impacts of marijuana, and especially the risks for adolescents. Such risks are real, and the damage is real.

It is not necessary to sort out the statistics in the states that have legalized marijuana to understand what will happen in Connecticut. It is common sense to know that legalization will increase teen use. The marijuana corporations are aiming this at kids. They characterize MJ use as “**recreational**”. Kids will assume that the legislature would not legalize MJ unless it is safe. And increased supplies and access definitely will lead to increased use by all ages, including kids. And then there is all the media attention and the advertising, which we all know works. And the candy, and the brownies, and the packaging for kids.

In conclusion, if you believe there will be a tax revenue bonanza that can be funneled to distressed municipalities, you better factor in all the costs that will also be imposed on the state..

You can't ignore the costs just because it is difficult to make precise estimates. Those economic costs need to include additional unemployment, educational failure, homelessness, and incarceration linked to additional addiction to marijuana, and to addiction to other drugs which follow. For example, in the state of Washington, which has legalized marijuana, Seattle's homelessness has been expanding considerably faster than the national average. Governments in the greater Seattle area now commit nearly \$1 Billion annually to the homeless problem, and it's not enough.

Stop and study the issue in more depth. Evaluate the public health impact, and the dollar costs of an 85 % increase in marijuana consumption and addiction in distressed municipalities as well as the rest of the state. What are the costs of that? You must gather that information before commercializing another dangerous substance.