

February 8, 2022

To: The Honorable Mike DeWine
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

The Honorable Bob Cupp
Ohio House of Representatives, 14th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

The Honorable Matt Huffman
Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Oppose the Commercialization and Mass Marketing of High Potency Marijuana

Governor DeWine, House Speaker Cupp, Senate President Huffman, and Members of the Ohio General Assembly,

At a time when drug overdoses in Ohio are at record levels, there are efforts underway today to commercialize the recreational use of high potency marijuana. If HB 498, HB 382, or the proposed initiated statute are successful in commercializing what most medical associations consider a harmful and addictive drug, it would most assuredly prove detrimental to Ohio families.

We no longer need to wonder what commercializing marijuana would mean for businesses, children, and communities. Eight years of data from states that have already journeyed down the rabbit-hole of commercialization show increases in addiction, cannabis and opioid use disorders, industrial accidents, hiring shortages, black market activity and crime, youth usage, and automobile accidents. **On behalf of the businesses, medical practices, students, families, nonprofits, ministries, and Ohio citizens that we represent, we write to encourage you to strongly oppose any effort to allow for the recreational use of marijuana in Ohio.**

The latest research and science related to marijuana commercialization leaves no doubt that legalizing commercial marijuana is a bad idea:

- The American Medical Association is opposed to legalization.¹
- Marijuana is often advertised as a solution for the opioid epidemic, claiming that it can be a substitute for opioids in pain management and an effective treatment for

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-05/a19-yps-resolution-05.pdf>

opioid use disorder. However, the JAMA Internal Medicine Journal stated that, **“The opioid crisis appears to be worsening where marijuana has been legalized.”**²

- According to a study reported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries, and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.³
- **It is now difficult for employers to find job applicants who can pass a drug test.** Colorado construction company GE Johnson was forced to hire out-of-state construction workers because too many Coloradans were failing pre-employment drug tests.⁴
- Unlike with alcohol, we do not yet have a reliable testing method to detect if someone is impaired by marijuana in the workplace. Insurance claims have become a growing concern among companies in legalized states because if marijuana use is allowed or drug testing ignored, **employers are at risk of liability claims when a marijuana-related injury or illness occurs onsite.**
- In Colorado, more than one in every four road deaths has involved a marijuana-impaired driver.⁵ Recent research published by JAMA predicts 6,800 additional deaths on the road nationally should federal legalization become reality.⁶ This is why AAA is also opposed to legalization.⁷
- Illicit markets have thrived in every “legal” state, such as Oregon, where **illegal marijuana makes up more than 70% of the market.**⁸
- The for-profit marijuana industry targets kids by producing marijuana-laced edible replicas of popular candy and snack brands, and markets these drugs both offline and on social media.
- Marijuana is addictive⁹ and may cause mental illnesses, ranging from anxiety¹⁰ and depression¹¹ to schizophrenia¹² and psychosis,¹³ and even suicidal thoughts.¹⁴ **These risks are heightened when consumed by youth.**
- Marijuana use has an association with future substance misuse and addiction. Research has found users of marijuana are more likely to misuse prescription

² <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2698365>

³ <https://www.acc.com/resource-library/top-ten-ways-marijuana-legalization-affects-employers>

⁴ https://gazette.com/news/drug-use-a-problem-for-employers/article_ab53e66f-4923-55a5-a48c-00b05cf262f9.html

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6913861/>

⁶

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342369555_Change_in_Traffic_Fatality_Rates_in_the_First_4_States_to_Legalize_Recreational_Marijuana

⁷ <https://newsroom.aaa.com/2021/04/risky-driving-behaviors-of-drivers-who-use-alcohol-and-marijuana/>

⁸ http://media.oregonlive.com/today/other/cannabis_enforcement_oregon%202.pdf

⁹ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>

¹⁰ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2765973?guestAccessKey=46e9676f-ddc9-4157-89ed->

[ea434c65e815&utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_content=tf1&utm_term=052720](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2765973?guestAccessKey=46e9676f-ddc9-4157-89ed-ea434c65e815&utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_content=tf1&utm_term=052720)

¹¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(17\)30280-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(17)30280-8/fulltext)

¹² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31618428/>

¹³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(19\)30048-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(19)30048-3/fulltext)

¹⁴ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2723657>

opioids.¹⁵ Though the majority of those using marijuana will not go on to use other drugs, more than **95% of those using heroin and cocaine started with marijuana.**¹⁶

- Marijuana use can **severely impact brain development in youth**, leading to lower IQ and worse mental health, academic, and professional outcomes.
- With a for-profit industry marketing in a variety of ways, more pregnant women than ever are using marijuana, and this has resulted in severe consequences for newborns.¹⁷
- Marijuana use can also cause cardiovascular harm,¹⁸ and may lead to certain kinds of cancer.¹⁹
- Commercialization is often touted as a social justice initiative aimed at decriminalizing marijuana and expunging the record of low-level offenders. However, it has shown not to have the intended effect on criminal justice reform. **Marijuana arrests nearly tripled the year after legalization in Washington D.C.**²⁰
- Among concerns of systemic injustice against lower-income, minority communities, legalization of marijuana only harms these communities further by promoting increased drug use and the accompanying negative social consequences.
- Former Denver mayor Wellington Webb stated that he regrets his vote to legalize. **“I heard the same promises about money for education,” he said. “That money is going to marijuana regulation and the pot industry, not students or schools.”**²¹
- There are currently more marijuana dispensaries in the state of Colorado than there are Starbuck’s and McDonald’s combined, and these dispensaries are located mostly in lower-income neighborhoods.²² Commercialization draws the marijuana industry into the state and dramatically alters the culture of businesses in the community.
- Tax revenue from marijuana accounts for less than one-percent of state revenues where the drug is legal. No “legal” state has met its initial tax revenue projections.
- A 2018 Centennial Institute study on the economic and social costs of legalized marijuana in Colorado found that **it cost the state \$4.50 to counteract the effects of marijuana legalization for each dollar brought in by marijuana tax revenues.**²³
- States with mature marijuana markets (CA, CO, NV, OR, and WA) are facing a combined budget deficit of \$71 billion. **Marijuana revenues are not helping with COVID-19 related economic shortfalls.**

Ohio’s own Attorney General’s Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention and Education recently found the death rate from opioid overdose to be the highest rate in ten years.²⁴

¹⁵ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2723657>

¹⁶ <https://www.jneurosci.org/content/39/10/1817>

¹⁷ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41372-019-0576-6>

¹⁸ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0735109719384888?via%3Dihub>

¹⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4642772/>

²⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-arrests-for-public-use-of-marijuana-nearly-tripled-last-year/2017/07/11/906bea50-627d-11e7-8b2b-b6c8c99c3bea_story.html

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtgsPeWsdJI&>

²² <https://sbg.colorado.gov/med/licensed-facilities>

²³ <https://centennial.ccu.edu/policy-briefs/marijuana-costs/>

²⁴ <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/January-2021/Record-Surges-in-Opioid-Overdoses-Prompts-AG-Yost>

At a time when Ohio families are grappling with unprecedented crime and addiction compounded by the stress of a global pandemic, we consider the commercialization of an addictive drug with such scientifically proven public health harms to be grossly irresponsible.

We urge you to oppose this legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Baer
President
Center for Christian Virtue

David Mahan
Policy Director
Center for Christian Virtue

Jim Ryan
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Association of Ohio

Keith Hamblen
Buckeye Christian School Organization

Amber Day, MD
Ohio Guilds of the Catholic Medical Association

Dr. Jeffrey Barrows
Christian Medical and Dental Association
Over 500 Ohio Members

Barbara Clark
Columbus Civilian Community Board

Pastor Greg Delaney
Emerge Recovery and Trade Initiative

Pastor John Coats
Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance

Corinne Gasper LaMarca
Jennifer's Messengers

Pastor Jeff Haygood
Living Word Church

Laura Ican
Moms for Liberty, Delaware County

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Catherine Wood
Ohio Adolescent Health Associates

Fran Gerbig
Prevention Action Alliance

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Relationships Under Construction

Charlotte McGuire,
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Pastor Gary Frost
Steel Valley Baptist Association

Kelli Karlich
Stowe Mission

Jodi Salvo
Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition

Keith Hurt
Youth Pastor Network