



Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists

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The Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Recreational Marijuana in Illinois and Public Safety

Dear Governor Pritzker:

The Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1982 by families who lost loved ones because of impaired driving crashes. As Illinois' first citizen action group dedicated to the fight against impaired driving, AAIM is extremely concerned about the possible traffic safety ramifications of legalizing recreational marijuana, and the harm drugs have already caused to our communities.

Cannabis is the most prevalent illicit drug consumed by impaired drivers. This fact is even more threatening when considering the risk of involvement in a motor vehicle crash doubles after consuming cannabis. Statistics from Washington State demonstrate the frequent use of marijuana by drivers involved in fatal crashes: 85% of these drivers tested positive for active THC. Colorado State Patrol reports that 76% of DUID involved marijuana, and 38% involved marijuana only. One-third of 18-24-year-olds are using marijuana in Colorado. Furthermore, data shows that when adolescents use marijuana, it may permanently affect a section of the brain that involves emotion and memory, and is associated with a wide range of adverse health consequences.

When comparing Colorado, the three years before legalizing recreational marijuana to the average of three years after legalization, adult marijuana use **increased 67 percent** and is **110 percent higher** than the national average, ranked 3rd in the nation." *Rocky Mountain HIDTA Strategic Intelligence Unit*. The legalization will increase the use of the drug and thereby increase traffic fatalities in Illinois.

A number of drivers testing positive for marijuana has grown exponentially, the statistics highlight the potential danger on our highways when marijuana consumption and driving occur. AAIM advocates continually work with families who have lost loved ones in marijuana-impaired driving crashes.

Drivers who have consumed cannabis attempt to compensate for their impairment by driving more slowly; however, physical motor control deteriorates with increasing task complexity. These drivers have impaired

cognitive function that causes their vehicle to weave more in traffic. Critical tracking tests, reaction times, and divided attention tasks all demonstrate cannabis-induced impairment. Combining cannabis with alcohol only exacerbates this behavior.

Additionally, increased study regarding the effects of marijuana consumption is urgently needed. The ability of drivers to perform complex attention tasks should be further researched before these individuals are allowed to operate motor vehicles on our highways. The abilities of both chronic and occasional recent users to safely operate a motor vehicle and perform complex driving tasks requires further evaluation to ensure public safety.

There are many reasons major medical associations, law enforcement, drug treatment agencies, and many other professionals, have voiced concerns and are opposed to legalizing today's higher potency marijuana for recreational use. In a January 2019 town hall forum hosted by Illinois State Representative **Marty Moylan** (D-Des Plaines), Dr. Raymond E. Bertino, MD outlined the grim future that lies ahead for the largest group of marijuana users, young adults aged 18 to 24. He presented data that indicates frequent marijuana use causes physical damage in critical brain development, which may lead to permanent cognitive impairment and an alarming trend of “failure to launch” in this vulnerable age group.

The issue of traffic safety and the future of our society is one that affects every citizen of Illinois. Its importance should not be overlooked. The possible impact of the legalization of recreational marijuana upon traffic safety and our culture must be studied and evaluated before further legalization is permitted. The safety of our highways, our citizens traveling upon them, our children and the developing teenage brain is of the utmost importance.

AAIM’s suggestions to reduce drug-impaired driving and curb drug misuse:

1. Support the development of drug-impaired driving legislation – with possible mandatory provisions.
2. Investigate scientifically vetted marijuana serum drug level monitoring programs that establish specific driving impairment standards similar to those for ethanol impairment.
3. Institute programs that promote and enhance officer training and use of drug recognition techniques.
4. Institute educational programs for judges and prosecutors regarding drug misuse recognition.
5. Provide funding for advanced technologies that enable officers to test for alcohol and other controlled substances in the field.
6. Provide comprehensive prevention programs for our youth.
7. Enact evidenced-based drug policies to protect our communities.

Sincerely,



Rita Kreslin

AAIM Executive Director

cc: Jessie White, Illinois Secretary of State