

MSMS Opposes Recreational Marijuana Ballot Initiative



This November, Michigan voters will be faced with the decision to legalize recreational marijuana in the State. If the ballot measure is approved, Michigan would become the 10th state, along with the District of Columbia, to legalize marijuana, although it remains illegal under federal law. *During the 2018 House of Delegates, MSMS membership approved policy that further cements existing policy recognizing marijuana as a public health problem and calls on MSMS to oppose the ballot initiative due to the known, as well as, the unknown adverse health impacts of marijuana, particularly in the adolescent population.*

While the ballot measure would only allow adults 21 and older to possess, use and grow marijuana, other states that have legalized recreational marijuana have witnessed an increase in youth marijuana use. Moreover, there is still much we don't know about the health impacts of marijuana and, consistent with MSMS policy on medical marijuana, our position is that further research on the short and long-term effects (positive and negative) of marijuana is critical before we move forward with any policies to legalize its use.

Additional details of the November ballot proposal include:

- Allow adults 21 and older to possess, use and grow certain amounts of marijuana.
- Impose a 10 percent excise tax at the retail level and the six percent sales tax on marijuana sales.
- Split those revenues with 35 percent going to K-12 education, 35 percent to roads, 15 percent to the communities that allow marijuana businesses in their communities and 15 percent to counties where marijuana businesses are located.
- Allow local governments, or electors via ballot proposal, to decide whether to limit or ban marijuana businesses.
- Restrict purchases of marijuana for recreational purposes to 2.5 ounces but allow individuals to keep up to 10 ounces of marijuana in their homes and cultivate up to 12 plants for personal use.
- Require the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs to regulate and license marijuana businesses, ranging from growers, transporters, testers and dispensaries

This November, Vote NO on the Ballot Proposal to Legalize Recreational Marijuana in Michigan

Seven Reasons Why MSMS Opposes

1) Marijuana has known adverse impacts on adolescents.

- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future 2017 Survey, marijuana use increased to 24 percent among adolescents in eighth, tenth and twelfth grades combined, and one in ten twelfth grade students vaped marijuana in the past year.
- Marijuana is now the number one reason kids enter treatment for substance abuse - more than alcohol, cocaine, heroin, meth, ecstasy and other drugs combined.
- In Colorado, where recreational marijuana is legal, youth past month marijuana use for 2014-2015 was 55 percent higher than the national average compared to 39 percent higher in 2011-2012.
- The human brain does not reach maturity (by MRI) until age 25 or so, and it is in adolescence that the brain lays down its neurological platform for a person's future life.
- We know some of the negative effects on adolescents include:
 - a) Addiction;
 - b) A dampening of motivation to take on life's challenges;
 - c) A lowered IQ compared with nonusers;
 - d) Psychosis in some children/adolescents; and
 - e) A peculiar hyperemesis syndrome for heavy users

2) Marijuana has addictive properties.

- The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that one in six teens that use marijuana become addicted to its use.

3) Marijuana is directly linked to impaired driving.

- Drugged-driving fatalities doubled in Washington State following legalization of marijuana, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.
- Marijuana-related traffic deaths increased 66 percent in the four-year average (2013-2016) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the four-year average (2009-2012) prior to legalization.¹

4) Legalized marijuana will lead to higher societal costs.

- In general, increased consumption of marijuana would likely lead to higher public health and financial costs for society.
- ER visits for marijuana use now exceed those for heroin and are continuing to rise - the yearly rate of emergency department visits related to marijuana increased 35 percent after the legalization of recreational marijuana in Colorado (2011-2012 versus 2013-2015).²
- The yearly number of marijuana-related hospitalizations increased 72 percent after the legalization of recreational marijuana (2009-2012 versus 2013-2015).³
- Addictive substances, like alcohol and tobacco, already result in much higher social costs than the revenue they generate with the cost to society of alcohol alone estimated to be more than 15 times the revenue gained by their taxation, according to an Obama administration report that summarizes a Center for Disease Control (CDC) study.

5) Legalizing marijuana has led to workplace problems.

- In states where marijuana is legal, employers are reporting more workplace incidents involving marijuana use, as well as, deaths from ingesting edible marijuana products; consideration must be given to the implications for the medical workplace.⁴

6) The ballot proposal is profit-driven.

- Legalized marijuana is being pushed in Michigan by growers in California and Oregon, and by cartels who have interest in capitalizing on the potential profit from marijuana marketing

7) Further research on the short- and long-term effects of marijuana is needed.

- While we know marijuana could have several potential long-term side effects^{5,6}, there is still much we don't know because the federal government has continued to prohibit the study of the short- and long-term effects (positive and negative) of marijuana.

Physicians are on the front-line, addressing the prevention of predictable harmful outcomes of poisoning from substances such as marijuana. That is why the MSMS opposes the 2018 ballot initiative to legalize recreational marijuana in Michigan.

Bad for Health... Bad for Michigan

¹ <http://www.rmhidta.org>

² <http://www.rmhidta.org>

³ ibid

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4410963/>

⁵ Nugent SM, Morasco BJ, O'Neil ME, et al. The effects of cannabis among adults with chronic pain and an overview of general harms: a systematic review. *Ann Intern Med.* 2017;167:319-31.

⁶ Murff HJ. Review: Weak evidence of benefits of cannabis for chronic neuropathic pain; moderate to weak evidence of adverse effects. *Ann Intern Med.* 2017 Dec 19;167(12):JC62. doi: 10.7326/ACPJC-2017-167-12-062.