

Hello. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the legislative forum at the State House this evening on marijuana legalization so I hope you will accept this email as my written testimony. Please share with the appropriate committee members.

My name is Mariah Sanderson. I am a 5th generation Vermonter, Essex Junction resident, mother of two elementary school aged kids and I do NOT believe that marijuana legalization is good for Vermont or for my family.

If we continue to legalize marijuana in our nation I believe we will soon realize it was the biggest public health mistake of at least my lifetime. Lobbying groups like Marijuana Policy Project, NORML and other special interest groups have been spending time and money across the US and in Vermont for at least 10 years, spreading misinformation about marijuana and downplaying the challenges of legalization. I believe that is partially because of their ties to the business industries that will profit from a new mood-altering drug they can market to Vermonters.

No one is being paid to get information out about marijuana science and industry practises like people are being paid to sell the public a narrative that says legalizing and commercializing the industry is a “movement of the people”, “good drug policy”, a solution to “the failed war on drugs”, “marijuana is safe”, and legalization is “inevitable”. NONE of those things are true and as I’m sure you’ve come to understand through this process, this topic is INCREDIBLY COMPLEX. It is short sighted and too simplistic to say that the only alternative to improving current policy is legalization. It was less than 2 years ago that we changed the policy to allow for civil penalties (instead of criminal charges) for possession of small amounts of marijuana - we need more time to assess the value and impact of that change. The US is the first place in the world to legalize commercial marijuana and I don't think Vermont (and thus my family) should be one of the world's test cases/guinea pigs.

If you’ve read the Vermont Health Impact Assessment of Marijuana Legalization you know that legalization does not bring good news for our state’s long-term outcomes. 10% increase in marijuana use among high school seniors, increases in traffic crashes, ER visits, mental health issues, addiction, treatment needs, and worsening academic performance. (Full report [here](#).) Smart marijuana policy should recognize that marijuana use has ill effects on health and should be discouraged.