

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I cannot thank you enough for the thoughtfulness and diligence with which you have approached the discussion surrounding S. 241. It has been an honor for me to be able to testify in your committee and to be a daily observer of this process.

I'm writing to follow up briefly in response to a few of the arguments I heard expressed against S. 241 during last week's public hearing.

(1) Does marijuana reduce IQ?

Dr. Catherine Antley cited one study that suggested that people who use marijuana heavily as adolescents experience an 8 point IQ drop by middle age. Even if this were true, I don't believe it should be considered a compelling argument against regulation — as Commissioner Chen noted in his testimony, rates of teen consumption for (regulated) alcohol and tobacco have declined while rates of (unregulated) marijuana consumption have not. As I believe you know, every serious participant in this debate acknowledges that reducing adolescent use should be a goal of Vermont's marijuana policy.

Regardless, the study Dr. Antley referenced has been widely criticized. As a Washington Post article noted, "Other researchers have since criticized that study's methods. A follow-up study in the same journal found that the original research failed to account for a number of confounding factors that could also affect cognitive development, such as cigarette and alcohol use, mental illness and socioeconomic status."

Additionally, studies published more recently — including a study of twin siblings — have failed to find reductions in IQ associated with marijuana use.

Obviously, marijuana use is associated with short-term cognitive impairment, but that is very different from saying it causes long-term IQ decline.

(2) Does marijuana cause psychosis?

For this answer I'll simply refer to the Rand Corporation's report: "The best available evidence is that any population effects of marijuana on the psychoses are likely to be small (Hall, 2014). Hickman and colleagues (2009) estimated that if cannabis is related causally then the risk of schizophrenia in 1997–99 for men aged 20–24 was approximately 1 in 1500 for heavy cannabis users and 1 in 2400 for light users. For women aged 20–24 the risk of schizophrenia was 1 in 4000 for heavy cannabis users and 1 in 6600 for light cannabis users. (p. 1858) This implies that thousands of users would have to be prevented from use for a year to prevent one case of schizophrenia" (38, emphasis added).

(3) Does smoking marijuana cause cancer?

There is no question that marijuana smoke contains carcinogens, and that smoking marijuana is not harmless. However, the largest epidemiological study on this question surprisingly found “no association at all” between marijuana smoking and lung cancer. Other research has surprisingly failed to find a decrease in lung function associated with marijuana smoking.

(3) Does S. 241 create a “corporate monopoly”?

Some have claimed that the legal market created by S. 241 would be a “monopoly” and that it would favor large corporations.

In reality, the bill proposed four tiers of possible sizes for cultivators. The largest cultivation facilities could initially be no larger than 10,000 square feet, which is much smaller than the limits in other states:

- In Washington, cultivation facilities can be as large as 30,000 square feet.
- In Colorado, where there is a plant limit rather than a size limit, cultivators can grow as many as 13,800 plants.
- In Oregon, indoor cultivators are capped at 10,000 square feet, but outdoor cultivators can be as large as 40,000 square feet.
- In Alaska, there is no limit on the potential size of a cultivation facility.

(4) Does marijuana regulation dramatically reduce the illicit market?

As you know, Colorado marijuana businesses did nearly \$1 billion in sales last year. Here is what Andrew Freedman, director of the Colorado Governor’s Office of Marijuana Coordination, told the Senate Judiciary in testimony January 20: “I would say, since there’s no data that shows a significant increase in usage, that, by and large, every dollar that goes into our regulated market is coming out of our black market, and those dollars continue to rise even as prices are dropping in our regulated market” (emphasis added).

Thank you again for your careful consideration of these issues! I look forward to observing your discussion this afternoon and in the coming days.

Sincerely,

Matt

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"The plain and simple truth is that alcohol fuels violent behavior and marijuana does not... alcohol contributes to literally millions of acts of violence in the United States each year. It is a major contributing factor to crimes like domestic violence, sexual assault, and homicide. Marijuana use, on the other hand, is absent in that regard from both crime reports and the scientific literature. There is simply no causal link to be found." –former Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper, from the foreword to *Marijuana is Safer: So Why Are We Driving People to Drink?* (2009, Chelsea Green Publishing).