



***Position Statement on the Potential Legalization of
Marijuana for Recreational Uses in Vermont***

Whereas, in the view of the Vermont School Boards Association, the purpose of public education is to afford every child an equal opportunity to a high quality education that supports the whole child, including his or her social, emotional, ethical, linguistic, cognitive and physical abilities;

And, whereas, all facets of a child's well-being impact his or her potential for academic success, career development, and long-term independence;

And, whereas the work of the Vermont School Boards Association includes thoughtful analysis and proactive response to major policy considerations that have the potential for affecting public education and the children it serves;

And, whereas the role of the school board includes the responsible stewardship of resources devoted to public education, and for demonstrating a responsibility to each and every child served within the public education system;

And, whereas in its recent [Health Impact Assessment of Marijuana Regulation in Vermont](#) the Vermont Department of Health has found:

- *Early and persistent use of marijuana can lead to the development of anxiety disorders later in life. Marijuana use may lead to development of depressive disorders. Among individuals at risk for the development of some psychotic disorders, marijuana use may increase the risk or mean that onset of those disorders begins earlier in life.*
- *Marijuana use may impact the physical structure of the brain. The exact effect, whether it is reversible, and what the potential health implications are, remains unknown.*
- *Early and continuous use of marijuana significantly increases risk of not completing high school, not enrolling or completing college, low educational achievement, and lower income.*
- *Marijuana use among high school and college students negatively impacts academic outcomes. The association has a dose-response relationship, which means the more a student uses, the worse the outcomes.*
- *The research on the relationship between marijuana use and academic outcomes is almost sufficient to show a cause-and-effect link between the two.*
- *Youth in more vulnerable situations (e.g. already experiencing behavior or mental health problems) are more likely to experience a negative academic outcome due to marijuana use.*

- *In Colorado, there has been a sharp increase in suspensions from 2013 to 2014. The state cannot confirm whether this is due to marijuana use, or due to the state's legalization in 2014. In Vermont, marijuana is the number one substance for which students are suspended from school.*
- *In a convenience sample of 130 Vermont educators, half reported they had not noticed an increase in marijuana use from the 2013 school year to the 2015 school year, but two-thirds expected to see an increase in use under a regulated system.*
- *A legalization and regulation protocol should never allow infused/edible products that could appeal to youth.*

And, whereas in the observation of Vermont's locally-elected school officials, the administrative and operational capacities of the State of Vermont's public safety, education and human service agencies are overtaxed by expanding needs and resource constraints;

And, whereas, the capacity of Vermont's public schools is also being strained due to an ambitious agenda for public education and the increasing role of schools in responding to student populations with both increased educational challenges and social and emotional needs;

Now, therefore, the Vermont School Boards Association calls upon the Vermont General Assembly, in its deliberations on legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes, to consider, respond to, and address the factors related to the findings and observations outlined above, including:

- Assuring that should legalization and regulation of marijuana be enacted, access to marijuana by individuals under the age 21 will indisputably be reduced;
- Assuring that child protection and child welfare issues are at the forefront of actions taken by the General Assembly related to potential legalization and regulation;
- Assuring that involved state agencies are provided the capacity necessary to implement and respond to a legalization and regulation program, if, and when one is established;
- Assuring that the Agencies of Human Services and Education are provided with sufficient resources to better respond to challenges associated with marijuana use by students and family members of students, if, and when a legalization and regulation program is established; and
- Assuring that any new obligations for schools associated with a legalization and regulation program, such as education and prevention activities, are supported with commensurate resources.

Approved by the VSBA Board of Directors on February 10, 2016