

Dear Chair Woman (Health and Human Services Committee) Pugh,

I am hopeful the House will consider looking at the latest S.216 bill and its removal of a “local option” for towns to restrict outlet density and location of Marijuana Dispensaries.

There is much talk in our state about the Opioid crisis and how we prevent it. While at the same time, we are increasing the availability of marijuana. The attached journal article and summary of it will show that marijuana use and opiate addiction have connections. Drug addiction, in general, stem from the same root causes. It is the local community that feels the impact of addiction and seeks to address it.

Best practices for substance abuse prevention (of ANY substance) include policies that restrict outlet density/location of any “adult only” substance at the local level. Restrictions around advertising of such products are also effective in preventing underage use. For the past 2-4 years, community coalitions across Vermont have been implementing federal grant strategies to increase local decision makers understanding of and capacity for taking on these best practice policy approaches as a means to build environments of health in their communities. To have the “local option” removed from S.216 is wasteful of the federal, state, and local financial resources and human capital.

There are multiple partners who have been involved in these efforts. Regional Planning Commissions and the Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns have been working in partnership with Prevention Coalitions to design model policies that promote health and protect the most vulnerable.

If you are interested in testimony from any one of these partners, I would be glad to accompany someone. Given the opportunity to speak about this, we would advocate that local option be put back into the S.216 bill. We applaud the parts of this bill that give the Agency of Agriculture regulatory and testing oversight of THC/CBD products so that consumers can be protected.

Thank you for considering,
Melanie Sheehan, MCHES

Melanie P. Sheehan, MCHES, TTS
Regional Prevention Program Manager
Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center
802-674-7450
Melanie.sheehan@mahhc.org
<http://www.mappvt.org>
Like us on Facebook!
<http://www.facebook.com/mappvt.org>

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