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## Commercialization of Marijuana

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The Vermont Medical Society (VMS) is opposed to the creation of any commercial system for retail sales of marijuana over and above what exists for the sale of medical marijuana because of the negative health effects on the Vermont population, especially youth and young adults.

**VMS urges the Governor of the State of Vermont and the Vermont General Assembly to oppose commercial sales of marijuana in Vermont until progress is made to:**

- Educate youth to counter the climate that portrays marijuana as a benign drug; and
- Institute comprehensive prevention models, including quality after-school programs that prevent risky behaviors among adolescents.

### **Why We Don't Need Commercial Sales of Marijuana in Vermont Now**

- Increased availability of marijuana and the normalization of marijuana use in Vermont has great potential to increase youth and young adult use rates; rates of marijuana use among young adults have been increasing nationwide, including among young adults in Colorado since that state approved commercial sales of recreational marijuana;<sup>i</sup>
- Vermont currently has some of the highest rates of young adult use of marijuana in the country, with 38% of 18-25 year-olds using marijuana in the last 30 days;<sup>ii</sup>
- Vermont Tax Department Commissioner Kaj Sampson estimates Vermont can expect \$15 million to \$20 million of annual revenue from retail cannabis, which will largely cover the cost of increased government oversight and may include funding for school-based prevention and highway safety but may not be sufficient to cover or be directed at all impacts on the health care, mental health and social services systems. <sup>iii</sup>
- Active black markets have continued their activity in all states that have legalized commercialized recreational marijuana, undermining states' ability to benefit from tax revenue;<sup>iv</sup> and
- While all approaches to legalizing use or sales of marijuana present risks to public health, an alcohol-style commercial model of sales creates the highest incentives for suppliers to promote use harmful to public health, to consolidate the market and to expand of the customer base through mass marketing.<sup>v</sup>

**At a minimum, any system of commercialization MUST include meaningful prevention and education measures as included in the Nov. 2018 Governor’s Marijuana Advisory Commission’s Education and Prevention Committee draft recommendations<sup>vi</sup> and best practices outlined in the Vermont Department of Health’s January 2016 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of Marijuana Regulation<sup>vii</sup> to:**

- establish and fully fund a substance misuse prevention and education fund;
- restrict the placement, density and access to venues to only those 21 years and older;
- establish taxation pared with minimum price standards and restrictions of price promotion;
- require child-resistant packaging; graphic health warnings;
- enforce marketing restrictions such as limiting displays, mass marketing and flavored products;
- enforce laws prohibiting sales to minors;
- establish a blood level operating limit for THC and driver testing infrastructure; and
- provide expanded screening in primary care.

This infrastructure must be in place before commercial marijuana sales begin.

For more information, see:

2018 VMS Resolution, “Opposing a System of Commercialized Sales of Recreational Marijuana:”  
[http://www.vtmd.org/sites/default/files/2018%20Opposing%20Commercial%20Sale%20of%20Marijuana\\_0.pdf](http://www.vtmd.org/sites/default/files/2018%20Opposing%20Commercial%20Sale%20of%20Marijuana_0.pdf)

To get involved, contact VMS Deputy Director, Stephanie Winters, [swinters@vtmd.org](mailto:swinters@vtmd.org)

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<sup>i</sup> According to figures from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, adults in Colorado who had consumed marijuana in the month before being surveyed went from being 12.86 percent of the adult population in 2012/13 to 16.62 percent in 2015/16. See <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/nsduh/state-reports-NSDUH-2016>

<sup>ii</sup> See p.2

[https://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/sites/mc/files/doc\\_library/2018\\_11\\_14\\_MJ%20Prevention%20Report%20DRAFT%20FINAL.pdf](https://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/sites/mc/files/doc_library/2018_11_14_MJ%20Prevention%20Report%20DRAFT%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Kit Norton, “Don’t expect a marijuana tax ‘windfall,’ commissioner tells advisory group,” Vermont Digger, September 10, 2018; see also Vermont Governor’s Advisory Committee Taxation and Regulation draft report, available at: <http://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/event-types/governors-marijuana-advisory-commission>

<sup>iv</sup> Tom James, "The Failed Promise of Legal Pot," The Atlantic, May 9, 2016

<sup>v</sup> Caulkins et al, Considering Marijuana Legalization: Insights for Vermont and Other Jurisdictions, RAND Corporation, 2015.

<sup>vi</sup>

[https://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/sites/mc/files/doc\\_library/2018\\_11\\_14\\_MJ%20Prevention%20Report%20DRAFT%20FINAL.pdf](https://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/sites/mc/files/doc_library/2018_11_14_MJ%20Prevention%20Report%20DRAFT%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup>

[http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016/11/HIA\\_marijuana\\_regulation\\_in\\_VT\\_App\\_2016.pdf](http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016/11/HIA_marijuana_regulation_in_VT_App_2016.pdf)