



My name is Stephanie Winters, Deputy Executive Director, Vermont Medical Society & Executive Director of the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter. **I am pleased to be able to speak in support of the committee bill in front of us today.**

As you know, both the VMS and AAPVT Chapter are opposed to the legalization and commercialization of marijuana. However, if the State is progressing down this path, it is imperative that we implement strong education and prevention programs before that takes place.

While all approaches to legalizing use or sales of marijuana present risks to public health, alcohol and tobacco-style commercial model of sales creates the highest incentives for suppliers to promote use that is harmful to public health, to consolidate the market and to expand the customer base through mass marketing – especially targeting youth.

For this reason, we must educate youth to counter the climate that portrays these harmful substances as benign. We must institute comprehensive prevention models, including quality after-school programs that prevent risky behaviors among adolescents. We support the inclusion of all of these substances in to the substance misuse prevention council and fund. We feel that a comprehensive prevention approach highlights that all of these substances are dangerous, addictive and cause great damage to our citizens.

As you know, the bill being considered by the Senate to authorize commercial sales has no funding for prevention or prevention programming. This fall, when analyzing a 26% tax rate on cannabis sales, Vermont Tax Department Commissioner Sampson estimated that this funding might cover the cost of increased government oversight and funding for school-based prevention and highway safety but may still be insufficient to cover or be directed at all impacts on the health care, mental health and social services systems.ⁱ We must do what is right for our citizens and protect them by adequately funding the programs that serve to help those already addicted and by adequately funding programs to stop addiction and health risks in the first place.

At a minimum, any system of commercialization MUST include meaningful prevention and education measures as included in the Governor's Marijuana Advisory Commission's Education and Prevention Committee recommendationsⁱⁱ and best practices outlined in the Vermont Department of Health's 2016 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of Marijuana Regulation, and must be in place before commercial marijuana sales begin. These measures include:

- establishing and fully funding a substance misuse prevention and education fund;
- restricting the placement, density and access to venues;
- taxation pared with minimum price standards and restrictions of price promotion;
- child-resistant packaging; graphic health warnings;
- marketing restrictions such as limiting displays, mass marketing and flavored products;
- enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors;
- a blood level operating limit for THC and driver testing infrastructure;
- expanded screening in primary care;

We do not want to be playing catch up as we have in the war on tobacco and alcohol. Thank you for your support.

ⁱ Kit Norton, "Don't expect a marijuana tax 'windfall,' commissioner tells advisory group," *Vermont Digger*, September 10, 2018:

<http://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/event-types/governors-marijuana-advisory-commission>

ⁱⁱ https://marijuanacommission.vermont.gov/sites/mc/files/doc_library/2018_11_14_MJ%20Prevention%20Report%20DRAFT%20FINAL.pdf