

The Coalition

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February 26, 2021

The Coalition for a Better Wallingford's position statement regarding legalized (Commercialized) recreational marijuana:

We are against any and all substances that would bring harm to families and youth of this community. This includes alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarette usage, marijuana, heroin, prescription pills; any and all misuse of substances. Our mission statement is very clear, "We are a 501 C-3 nonprofit organization providing innovative support for families affected by substance abuse, prevention and education for youth and families of our youth, and advocacy for local, state, and federal resources to combat the effects of alcohol and drug abuse in the Wallingford community."

The American Academy of Science states that memory, motivation, cognition, emotion and various other executive brain functions are significantly disrupted by chronic marijuana use. Marijuana offers us a unique challenge because of the illegal classification given to the substance by the federal government. There is undeniable data by numerous national agencies that confirms any consumption of marijuana by someone under the age of 25 creates the likelihood of addictive brain behavior. After an exhaustive review, the National Academy of Medicine found in 2017 that "Cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of developing schizophrenia and other psychoses; the higher the use, the greater the risk." The CDC, FDA, American Association of Pediatrics, Human Health Services and NIDA are among others that echo this sentiment. There are no state/federal agencies that are currently recommending or condoning marijuana usage.

There is an increased threat to our youth by THC laced edibles and consumables. Edibles are extremely high in potency and the cumulative effect of ongoing consumption is a major source of overdose. Legalizing commercialization means that companies will be free to market their product any way that they can. Does anyone really think that our youth would not be attracted to products such as gummy candies, jelly beans, cookies, sodas/drinks/coffees, lollipops, and chocolate? All being laced with THC.

What has happened where it has already been legalized?

The cost of dealing with the public health issues has been significantly greater than the benefits.

- In none of the 10 states it has been legalized, is it producing the tax revenue that was predicted.
- It has not reduced the black market, in fact, it has done the opposite.
- Youth usage rates are significantly higher than they are where it is still illegal.
- Emergency room visits for severe THC poisoning are higher.
- Heavy marijuana usage has risen.
- Traffic fatalities related to THC impairment are higher and there is currently no way to test when someone is driving under the influence of marijuana.

Then, there is the argument of social injustice. People of color are inadvertently targeted for these crimes and are incarcerated at a higher rate than the general population. In states where it has become legalized, that relationship has not changed. There is no evidence that the introduction of marijuana cuts down on the usage of any other addictive substance. In fact, often times the opposite occurs and usage of other substances remains on the rise. Is marijuana a gateway drug? There are many substances that could be considered gateway drugs. For example, alcohol, tobacco, and now, vaping. If marijuana is legalized, that normalizing impact on the youth perception will contribute to easier and more frequent access to marijuana as a gateway substance. Currently, marijuana is the most common substance of abuse for teens who enter drug treatment. (Source: NIDA) Lastly, there is no significant body of research at any local/state/federal level which justifies the legalization of marijuana without the dire implications it brings. Know the risks.

Ken Welch, President
Coalition for a Better Wallingford