

School Committee Position Statement Adult-Use Marijuana

We, the School Committee of the Barnstable Public Schools, stand in opposition to any amendment to current zoning regulations that would create cannabis overlay districts within the Town of Barnstable. We support the prohibition of non-medical marijuana establishments in all zoning districts.

The Committee believes that legalizing the commercialization of marijuana through cultivation and sale in the Town of Barnstable is not in the best interest of our students. Increasing accessibility to legalized, adult use marijuana sends the wrong message to our students. We believe that the Council has the opportunity to send a clear, concise and unequivocal message to our students that the adults of this community will not put our own commercial or recreational interests above their safety and wellbeing and we will not be hypocrites telling students to “Just Say No” while simultaneously marketing edibles and other enticing marijuana products.

Despite changing social norms, marijuana is an addictive substance that presents many risks, especially to its youngest users. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, a subunit of the National Institutes of Health, as many as 30% of marijuana users suffer from some degree of marijuana use disorder. Individuals who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are four to seven times more likely than adults to develop marijuana use disorder.¹ Right now, the best research available tells us that repeated marijuana use has a particularly negative impact on adolescents and young adults. While research into the causal relationship is ongoing, exposure to THC is currently linked to a number of poor life outcomes for adolescents. “In the short term, marijuana use has been shown to impair functions such as attention, memory, learning and decision-making. Those effects can last for days after the high wears off. Heavy marijuana use in adolescents or early adulthood has been associated with a dismal set of life outcomes including poor school performance, higher dropout rates, increased welfare dependence, greater unemployment and lower life satisfaction.”²

Every year, the District devotes significant time and resources to educating students about these risks while simultaneously helping them develop the skills and strategies necessary to make healthy, safe choices for themselves. Introducing Recreational Marijuana Establishments into our community will send students mixed messages regarding these risks.

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that children of marijuana users are at an increased risk of use themselves. Consequently, even if the intention is to only provide access to legal, adult users, we would, in fact, be creating an environment that, by adult actions and behavior, normalizes and encourages marijuana use.

¹ “Is marijuana addictive?” <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive> (July 24, 2018).

² Weir, Kirsten “Marijuana and the Developing Brain,” *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Vol 46, No. 10, Nov. 2015, retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/11/marijuana-brain.aspx>, July 24, 2018.

Finally, as we have learned through the mass marketing of cigarettes, e-cigarettes and alcohol, the commercialization of any product inevitably targets children. The introduction of edibles further increases the allure to children and adolescents and reduces detectability for adults. Fudgy brownies, moist cookies and colorful gummies do not come with the telltale cloud of skunky smoke. They are far more discrete and, therefore, dangerous for our students.