

To: All Police Chiefs

From: Chief A. Wayne Sampson (Ret.), Executive Director

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Coalition for Safe Streets: Condensed Question 2 MEDIA talking points

1. A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM CURRENT LAW

Question 2 is a radical measure being promoted by well-heeled out-of-state interests whose goal is sweeping drug legalization in this country. If Question 2 passes, Massachusetts will be one of the only states in the country to decriminalize marijuana other than for medical use. And for kids under 21: Question 2 will result in lower penalties for marijuana possession than for the possession of alcohol.

2. EMPOWERING DRUG DEALING; ENDANGERING OUR COMMUNITIES

Question 2 will empower drug dealers as they make life more dangerous in our communities. One ounce of marijuana is worth about \$600 dollars and represents about 60 individual sales. Question 2 is a ready-made business plan for drug dealers. Pounds of marijuana will be brought into our neighborhoods – and cut up into one-ounce packages – once there is no downside to retailing the drug. In order to use marijuana our kids have to buy it, which almost always puts them in dangerous situations. After all, just because you make life easier for drug dealers, doesn't mean they become less dangerous.

3. CARNAGE ON THE ROAD; HIGH TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL

Question 2 will undoubtedly result in more teenagers – and adults – behind the wheel of a car high on marijuana. This means more carnage on our roadways that puts us all in danger. According to MADD and Liberty Mutual, 41% of teens are not concerned about driving high on marijuana. What message would legalization send?

4. TEEN USE IS DOWN; WHY SEND THE OPPOSITE MESSAGE?

According to the Massachusetts Departments of Public Health and Education teen marijuana use has dropped significantly in the last decade. Many of our teens are finally making the right decisions about drugs. Why would we want to send the opposite message – that drug use is safe and acceptable?

5. POOR AND MINORITY NEIGHBORHOODS HARMED

Question 2 represents a step backward for poor, minority and urban communities. There is no doubt that if drug possession is treated like a traffic violation, we'll see more marijuana in Massachusetts -- Predominantly to poor and minority neighborhoods across the state. This is not the kind of "reform" our urban neighborhoods need – promoted by well-heeled out-of-staters who will never have to confront the consequences of radical drug decriminalization.

6. NO ONE GOES TO JAIL FOR SIMPLE POSSESSION

Virtually no one goes to jail for simple marijuana possession alone. Not one person went to jail last year simply for possession of an ounce or less of marijuana in Suffolk County. Jail sentences that do involve marijuana usually also involve the crimes that so often accompany marijuana on the streets of our cities: Armed robbery, assault, rape or burglary. Current law works: First time marijuana offenders receive 6 months probation, after which their records are sealed. No jail. No CORI.

7. THE REAL COSTS OF LEGALIZATION

The idea that decriminalization of drugs – thus increasing use, abuse and trafficking – will save the Commonwealth money is laughable. Drug use costs this country \$258 billion per year, and increased drug abuse and drug trafficking will come at an incredible cost to the Commonwealth in terms of increased health costs, traffic injuries and fatalities, increased law enforcement costs, lost productivity, lower workplace safety, and the societal costs of addiction on communities and families.