



## **Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association**

### Position on the Legalization of Marijuana

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) strongly opposes the legalization of marijuana in Massachusetts. As veteran police officers, we believe that allowing the delivery, sales, transfer, growing, cultivating, processing and manufacturing of marijuana, and its derivatives would have a detrimental impact upon the citizens of Massachusetts for a variety of reasons.

Given that Massachusetts is mired in an addiction epidemic of historic proportions, now is not the time to increase access to marijuana, marijuana by-products and the high-concentrate THC products that would be permitted should the November ballot question pass. While many voters may be under the impression that the ballot question would permit the sale of marijuana in plant form, it would also allow for the commercial sale of potent extracts including hash oil, resins, tinctures and various forms of concentrates that would include marijuana candy and beverages containing high levels of THC.

Should the November ballot initiative pass, we believe that Massachusetts would quickly suffer the same undesirable impacts taking place in Colorado and Washington state, where recently enacted laws now allow commercial marijuana sales. Those states have already seen surges in impaired driving, drugged-driving fatalities and diversion of bulk marijuana to other states, as well as the phenomenon of people flocking to those states for the purpose of buying and using drugs there. Most alarmingly, a study recently released in Colorado showed increasing use of drugs by young people after marijuana was legalized there.

While traffic fatalities involving drivers under the influence of marijuana and THC have increased in Colorado and Washington, there are no standardized field sobriety tests for driving while high, nor is there a scientific standard of measurement for law enforcement to determine impairment. There is no breathalyzer for weed.

The proponents of marijuana legalization would have voters believe that draconian drug laws have resulted in the arrest of people for possessing pot, but that's not true. First of all, since 1975 possession of marijuana offenses in Massachusetts were automatically dismissed and the records were sealed. And since 2009, possession of an ounce or less of marijuana has been "decriminalized" and people caught with weed are issued a \$100 citation. In fact, as a result of decriminalization police officers have lost the authority to search vehicles for marijuana in all but the most extraordinary cases.

The proponents would also have you believe that allowing marijuana sales would cut into the profits of organized crime, but that's not what has happened elsewhere. Our colleagues in Colorado have seen drug dealers come from other states to take advantage of the fact that people there can now buy pot legally. And given the choice between buying it in a store where it is "regulated" and taxed, and getting it on the street where no tax is paid, customers are attracted to the street. Colorado is not making the tax income voters had hoped.

We are encouraged by the recent outcome of a ballot initiative in Ohio where voters rejected legalization in spite of a \$25 million campaign by the pro pot movement. Massachusetts voters should brace themselves for an onslaught of advertising financed by the Marijuana Policy Project and other pro-marijuana groups over the summer and leading into the November election. We hope and trust that voters will see through the rhetoric and falsehoods and realize that there is simply no advantage to legalizing the commercial sale of marijuana, and that the detrimental effects seen in Colorado and Washington would occur here if the ballot question were to pass.

We are proud to join the Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts in working to defeat this terrible idea. We are encouraged that Governor Baker, Speaker DeLeo, Mayor Walsh and Attorney General Healey spoke out so soon about their opposition, as did the Construction Industries of Massachusetts, Suffolk County Sheriff Steve Tompkins, the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, the Massachusetts Hospital Association, the Massachusetts Medical Society, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, all Massachusetts District Attorneys and many others.

Legalizing drug sales at this time in our history is a terrible idea. There is no benefit and the consequences would be dire. We hope voters will soundly reject the ballot question.

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