

## Testimony in Opposition to HB1420

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Madam Chair Lee and honorable members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of Family Policy Alliance of North Dakota. I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 1420.

Family Policy Alliance of North Dakota is opposed to recreational marijuana on multiple grounds, but they all find their nexus in the health and welfare of North Dakota families. The family is the foundation for our communities, society, and state. Fundamentally, legalized recreational marijuana will not further help our state's families thrive, but frankly, do just the opposite – further contribute to the disintegration and devaluation of the family.

I know that you have probably already heard from those in favor of recreational marijuana in our state. However, rather than scrutinize language to try and *mitigate* impacts of potential recreational marijuana, I would like to focus on the *effects*. I want to make sure that we don't lose sight of what is at stake.

The best information to evaluate the effects of legalized recreational marijuana on a state are clearly from the experiences of other states. There are 14 states and the District of Columbia that currently have legalized recreational marijuana. I will be using their experiences, particularly those of the states with the most history, such as Colorado, Washington, and Oregon. I have organized my remarks in broad categories of impacts, consistent with my presentation to the 2019-2020 Interim Judiciary Committee on this issue.

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### **1. State's economy, including unemployment and homelessness rates, potential tax revenues and job opportunities, spending on public health and safety programs, including law enforcement agencies and drug treatment programs; and tourism, real estate, construction, and banking.**

“Five years of retail pot coincide with five years of a homelessness growth rate that ranks among the highest rates in the country.” [Colorado]

“Directors of homeless shelters, and people who live on the streets, tell us homeless substance abusers migrate here for easy access to pot.” [Colorado]

“Washington State has more marijuana businesses than Starbucks or McDonalds. Colorado has more marijuana businesses than McDonalds and Starbucks combined.”

“A January 2018 paper in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* showed that people who used cannabis in 2001 were almost three times as likely to use opiates three years later, even after adjusting for other potential risks.”

“Over half the pot money promised for drug prevention, education & treatment in Washington never materialized...”

## **2. Minors, including the rate of drug usage, the effects of marijuana on developing brains, and high school dropout rates.**

“An investigation by Education News Colorado, Solutions and the I-News Network shows drug violations reported by Colorado’s K-12 schools have increased 45 percent in the past four years, even as the combined number of all other violations has fallen,” explains an expose on escalating pot use in schools by Rocky Mountain PBS in late 2016. The investigation found an increase in high school drug violations of 71 percent since legalization. School suspensions for drugs increased 45 percent. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health found Colorado ranks first in the country for marijuana use among teens, scoring well above the national average..”

“Overall use [of marijuana] in CO and WA among minors (ages 12-17) is both higher than and rising faster than the national average.”

“Colorado toxicology reports show the percentage of adolescent suicide victims testing positive for marijuana has increased (Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment [CDPHE], 2017).”

## **3. The legal system, including crime rates, the prison population, and rates of usage of other drugs.**

“A Swiss study of 265 psychotic patients published in *Frontiers of Forensic Psychiatry* last June found that over a three-year period, young men with psychosis who used cannabis had a 50 percent chance of becoming violent. That risk was four times higher than for those with psychosis who didn’t use, even after adjusting for factors such as alcohol use. Other researchers have produced similar findings.”

A 2013 paper in an Italian psychiatric journal examined almost 1,600 psychiatric patients in southern Italy and found that cannabis use was associated with a ten-fold increase in violence.”

“The criminals are still selling on the black market. ...we have plenty of cartel activity in Colorado (and plenty of illegal activity that has not decreased at all.” —Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman

#### **4. Workers' compensation and work-related accidents.**

“Accidents, injuries, absenteeism, and disciplinary problems among pot users all increased after legalization by amounts ranging from 55-85%.” [Colorado]

The Greater North Dakota Chamber, the state’s largest business advocacy organization, opposed ballot Measure 3 (legalizing recreational marijuana).

#### **5. Public health and safety.**

“Five years of Big Marijuana ushered in a doubling in the number of drivers involved in fatal crashes who tested positive for marijuana, based on research by the pro-legalization Denver Post.”

“[The] percentage of WA traffic fatalities where [the] driver tested positive for recent marijuana use more than doubled the year recreational marijuana sales began.”

“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.’”

There are hundreds of Marijuana Edibles available in Colorado, including almost 130 at one dispensary site alone, including things such as cereal, microwave popcorn, cough drops, and marinara sauce.

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As is quickly evident from this limited review of the impacts of legalized recreational marijuana, the list of negative impacts is significant. For these reasons and the aforementioned potential destructive impact on North Dakota families, Family Policy Alliance of North Dakota opposes any legalization of recreational marijuana in our state, including HB1420.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions you may have via the contact information I have provided.

## Sources

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*How do employees using marijuana affect your business?*, James P Randisi, RANDISI & ASSOCIATES, INC., October 1, 2015.

*Fatal crashes involving drivers who test positive for marijuana have doubled in states where recreational use is legal*, report says, Dave Herndon, MediaNews Group Inc., Jan 30, 2020, Updated Jan 30, 2020.

The Kind Room, Marijuana Dispensary menu of edibles, [https://www.leafly.com/dispensary-info/the-kind-roomf0f7/menu?product\\_category\[\]=Edible](https://www.leafly.com/dispensary-info/the-kind-roomf0f7/menu?product_category[]=Edible)

*The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact*, Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Oct 2017, Volume 5

*Economic and Social Costs of Legalized Marijuana*, Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University, Nov 15.

WA\_CO Marijuana analysis.pdf (attached)

Top-ten-myths.pdf (attached)

Edibles-List.pdf (attached)