



AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 1400 Cannabis - Legalization, Taxation, and Regulation

Sponsor: Delegate Moon et al.

- AAA opposes the legalization of marijuana for recreational use because of its inherent traffic safety risks and due to the difficulties in writing legislation that protects the public and treats drivers fairly.
- We know that drugged driving is on the rise and more prevalent than the public may realize.
- The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released research earlier this year, which showed a troubling number of Washington state drivers involved in fatal crashes are testing positive for recent use of marijuana since that state legalized the drug in December 2012.
- The share of drivers who, after a fatal crash, tested positive for active THC – the drug's main psychoactive ingredient – has doubled since the state legalized marijuana.
- We, at AAA believe the increase raises significant traffic safety concerns for drivers across the country.
- The latest AAA Foundation research found that between 2008 and 2012 – the five-year period before the drug was legal – an estimated 8.8% of Washington drivers involved in fatal crashes tested positive for THC. That rate rose to 18% between 2013 and 2017.
- Results from the analysis suggest that legalization of recreational marijuana may increase the rate of THC-positive drivers involved in fatal crashes.
- This is particularly concerning since research has shown that marijuana can have significant effects on driver behaviors behind the wheel.
- Marijuana use can inhibit concentration, slow reaction times and cloud judgment. Its effects vary by individual, but a number of studies have concluded that marijuana use impairs the ability to drive safely. Previous research suggests that users who drive high are up to twice as likely to be involved in a crash.
- Unfortunately, most states are not fully prepared to handle an increasing spike in drugged driving. That is largely because no roadside technology exists that can measure THC in the brain, which is where impairment occurs.
- It has taken many years to change attitudes about drinking and driving, and we must now begin the same process of educating the public about drugged driving.

- As an advocate for the safety of motorists, AAA is troubled by the safety implications of individuals using marijuana and getting behind the wheel.
- Quality data and research regarding the scope of the problem and its solutions are woefully lacking. More importantly, there is insufficient scientific data to provide motorists with guidance on the use of the drug in a way that does not impact their ability to drive safely.
- Last year, a Foundation survey found that nearly 70% of Americans think it's unlikely a driver will get caught by police for driving shortly after using marijuana. The survey also revealed that an estimated 14.8 million drivers report getting behind the wheel within one hour after using marijuana in the past 30 days.
- Legalizing marijuana before we are prepared to manage the potential highway safety consequences, and provide law enforcement officers with all the training and resources they need to address this issue, is dangerous.
- We commend the bipartisan workgroup of Maryland legislators, that was created last year, for their steps to study the issue of legalization and all of the possible ramifications, including real-world traffic safety outcomes, public health impacts, and practical enforcement options.
- AAA respectfully requests the Committee render an **unfavorable** report on **HB 1400** and allow the work group to continue to study the issue of legalizing recreational marijuana.

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