

Marijuana Smoke Testimony – Winter 2023

Honorable committee members, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

I am Debra Roy, the Vice President of the Chemical Sensitivities Disorders Association, a life-long member of GASP (Group Against Smokers Pollution) and a retired Civil Servant belong to NARFE (the National Active and Retired Federal Employee Association). I am here to request that the state prohibit the smoking and vaping of marijuana. Nobody should have to breathe secondhand marijuana smoke or vapor at work, in public or where they live. Secondhand marijuana smoke contains all the toxins of tobacco smoke plus 3.5 times more particulate matter, 20 times more ammonia and THC, an intoxicant. Ammonia is an irritant. People with chemical sensitivities are extraordinarily sensitive to irritants. Here is the chart of the cannabinoid pathway of a person with chemical sensitivities. 21 of the 34 genes in this pathway are impaired. Each gene is made up of 2 alleles, one inherited from each parent. The green genes in this chart are normal. Yellow genes consist of a normal allele and an impaired allele. Red genes have 2 impaired alleles. This chart represents a person who is a slow metabolizer of cannabinoids. As a result, upon exposure, this person will experience a back up of cannabinoids. Consequently this person will get sick at much lower levels of exposure than people with normal genes and will take a longer period of time to clear the toxins from his body. One thing that the antismoking movement has established is that smokers do not have the right to make others sick. Ethically and legally society has an obligation to protect sensitive people from harm. Exposure to tobacco smoke is a nightmare for people with chemical sensitivities. Soon marijuana smoke will be an even bigger nightmare for them. Presently people with chemical sensitivities are having problems finding affordable smoke-free housing. The introduction of marijuana smoke into this environment will worsen the situation, causing some sensitive people to become homeless. Already a state Senator and Delegate representing P.G. County have received complaints from constituents about being sickened by neighbors' marijuana smoke drifting onto their property.

The secondhand smoke exposure from marijuana is more hazardous than tobacco smoke. People, even non-sensitive people, who are exposed to 2nd hand marijuana smoke can have detectable levels of THC in their blood and urine. They can even become intoxicated by the exposure. Particulate concentrations created by dabbing and vaping cannabis can create levels of indoor air pollution similar to those seen in extreme air pollution events like wildfires and severe industrial pollution. Exposures at these concentrations can cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease. A Nov 2022 Radiology study entitled "Chest CT Findings in Marijuana Smokers" reported higher rates of emphysema and airway inflammation in marijuana smokers than tobacco-only smokers.

In the July 2022 edition of the medical Journal Lancet, British mental health experts warned that cannabis is not a harmless drug, but is linked to psychosis and addiction. Therefore it should not be treated as an ordinary commodity in the marketplace. People who use highly potent marijuana daily were five times more likely to be diagnosed with psychosis compared to those who never used the drug. Marijuana can be highly addictive resulting in cannabis use disorder (CUD). Those with CUD are at higher risk of problems with memory, attention and learning. As a result, in 2014, California extended Medicaid coverage to low-income individuals so they could have access to CUD treatment. Here is an example of how addictive cannabis use can be. My friend's 20 something son-in-law was a marijuana vaper. Then he caught COVID. That landed him in the ICU and he almost died. When he recovered and was released from the hospital, he was warned that if he resumed vaping, it would kill him. He stopped vaping for about a year and now he has resumed vaping marijuana.

One of the things that sets marijuana smoking apart from tobacco smoke is the fact that marijuana is intoxicating. Tobacco smoking had been identified as a cause of many home and forest fires. (see Laurel library sign) When a marijuana smoker finishes a joint, he is high and not aware of what he does with the lit butt. This will cause even more house, multifamily dwelling and forest fires

There will be even more loss of life resulting from these fires. Additionally the fires will contribute to global warming. Since environmentalists are concerned about how much cows contribute to global warming, I cannot help but wonder how much just lighting up marijuana joints will add to global warming.

Marijuana smoking is a problem at both colleges and high schools. (see Bowie State sign) At college the problem is not only in the classroom, but also in polluted dormitories. Just think of trying to study in an environment that is irritating, hallucinogenic and interferes with attention, memory and learning.. "Getting it right from the Start" gives us this caution : "We have a collective responsibility to protect children and youth from harm to the developing brain. Of particular concern is the impact of legalization on youth below the age of 25, because research suggests that use among youth carries special risks to the developing brain that are not present for older adults...DAILY USE OF CANNABIS BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HALVES THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE; and DAILY USE OF CONSUMPTION OF CANNABIS WITH OVER 10% THC ...IS ASSOCIATED WITH A FIVEFOLD INCREASE IN THE ODDS OF DEVELOPING PSYCHOSIS, A HEARTRENDING BURDEN FOR FAMILIES AND AN EXPENSIVE AND COMPLEX BURDEN FOR COMMUNITIES...YOUNG ADULT MARIJUANA USE IS AT A 35 YEAR HIGH, AND DAILY MARIJUANA USE AMONGST 8TH,10TH AND 12TH GRADERS HAS ALSO RISEN PRECIPITOUSLY. According to the CDC: "IN A SINGLE YEAR, THE VAPING EPIDEMIC... HOSPITALIZED OVER 2,700 AND KILLED 68". Because of their experience with vaping, Contra Costa County, California has banned all cannabis and tobacco vaping products. States legalizing cannabis have seen a bigger increase in hospitalizations and poison control visits than other states. States that have legalized cannabis have seen an increase in teenagers getting asthma. There is also concern about parents exposing their children to secondhand marijuana smoke. According to Leana Wen the former Baltimore health commissioner, there is abundant research showing that exposure to marijuana during childhood impacts later ability, including memory, attention, motivation and learning. These facts make it very clear that any profits derived from the sale of cannabis are literally going to go up in smoke.

According to the JAMA article "Assessment of Incorporation of Lessons from Tobacco Control in City and County Laws Regulating Legal Marijuana in California", "policy lessons from tobacco control and other legal but harmful products went largely unheeded by cities and counties. Communities may wish to consider precautionary incorporation of these policy lessons into marijuana regulation from the start, potentially reducing the risk of failing in our responsibility to protect youths and health for decades to come." According to a Politico article "many in the public health world are frustrated that policymakers, eager to get on with legalization, missed the opportunity to mitigate the consequences in advance." Those of us from GASP are here to ask you to heed the lessons learned from tobacco control and prohibit marijuana smoking and vaping in Maryland.