



## Board of Health

Edward Cosgrove, PhD  
Chair

Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP  
Member

Jane Fogg, MD, MPH  
Vice Chair

# Policy Position: Commercial Marijuana<sup>i</sup>

The Needham Board of Health believes that the legalization of marijuana for widespread commercial use is incompatible with the Board's mandate from the Massachusetts General Court to protect the public health and wellness of the Town of Needham and all its residents. <sup>ii,iii</sup>

Marijuana use, particularly long-term, chronic use that begins at a young age, can lead to dependence and addiction.<sup>iv</sup> Marijuana is the second leading substance for which people receive drug treatment<sup>v</sup> and also a major cause for visits to hospital emergency departments.<sup>vi</sup> And marijuana potency has continually increased over the past few decades,<sup>vii</sup> raising serious concerns about implications for public health – especially among adolescents, for whom long-term use of marijuana may be linked with lower IQ (as much as an average 8 point drop) later in life.<sup>viii</sup>

Scientific research shows us that increasing the availability of drugs can lead to increased use, and ever greater consequences resulting from that use:

- Legalization increases the availability and acceptability of drugs, as we see with alcohol and tobacco – which far outpaces the use of illegal drugs.<sup>ix</sup>
- Increased availability and acceptability of marijuana would likely lead to increased consumption of the drug.<sup>x</sup> Since legalization in Colorado teen use has jumped 20% and it is has the dubious distinction of being the state with the highest rate of teen marijuana use. <sup>xi</sup>

Data from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey demonstrates that a significant number of youth in Needham and across the state already use marijuana, which makes the proposition of increased availability of the drug through legalization a serious concern for the local community.

- In 2014, 32% of Needham High School students reported they had used marijuana in their lifetime and 22% reported use in the past 30 days. <sup>xii</sup> In Massachusetts, high school students indicated that 41% had used marijuana in their lifetime and 25% reported use in the past 30 days.<sup>xiii</sup>

- Youth in Needham and in Massachusetts indicate a low perception of risk associated with marijuana use. Less than half (38%) of Massachusetts high school students reported that they believe smoking marijuana occasionally would be a moderate or great risk to their health and in Needham only 54% of high school students surveyed reported that there is a moderate or great risk of people harming themselves if they smoke marijuana one or twice a week. <sup>xiv</sup>

The Needham Board of Health joins with a long list of organizations including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Massachusetts Medical Association, the Massachusetts Hospital Association, and the Massachusetts Public Health Association, all of which have concluded that the legalization of commercial marijuana is incompatible with public health and community well-being.

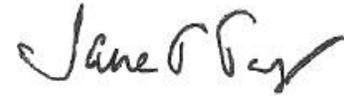
This Policy Position formally adopted following a unanimous vote during a noticed public meeting, October 21, 2016.



Edward Cosgrove, PhD  
Chair



Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP



Jane Fogg, MD, MPH  
Vice Chair

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> Board of Health Policy Position #1, considered on September 11, 2016 and adopted on XYZ, 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> M.G.L. ch. 111, s.31, available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVI/Chapter111/Section31>

<sup>iii</sup> M.G.L. ch. 111, s.122, available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVI/Chapter111/Section122>

<sup>iv</sup> Hasin DS, Saha TD, Kerridge BT, et al. Prevalence of Marijuana Use Disorders in the United States Between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2015;72(12):1235-1242. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.1858.

<sup>v</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions by Primary Substance of Abuse, 2010*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [2012]. Available: <http://www.dasis.samhsa.gov/webt/quicklink/US10.htm>

<sup>vi</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Highlights of the 2010 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) Findings on Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [July 2012]. Available: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k12/DAWN096/SR096EDHighlights2010.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Mehmedic Z, Chandra S, Slade D, et al. Potency trends of Δ9-THC and other cannabinoids in confiscated cannabis preparations from 1993 to 2008. *J Forensic Sci*. 2010;55(5):1209-1217. doi:10.1111/j.1556-4029.2010.01441.x.

<sup>viii</sup> Meier et al., "Adolescent-onset cannabis and neuropsychological health." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. [August 27, 2012]. Available: <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2012/08/22/1206820109>

<sup>ix</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [September 2012]. Available: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k11Results/NSDUHresults2011.htm>

<sup>x</sup> Kilmer, Beau, et al., *Altered States? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets*. RAND Corporation. [2010]. Available: [rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2010/RAND\\_OP315.pdf](http://rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP315.pdf)

<sup>xi</sup> Massachusetts Prevention Alliance. *Marijuana: Know the Facts, Then You Decide* [Internet]. MA: Massachusetts Prevention Alliance; 2016 May [cited 2016 Aug 28]. Available from: [http://www.mapreventionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Marijuana-Policy-Fact-Sheet\\_May-2016\\_FINAL-1.pdf](http://www.mapreventionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Marijuana-Policy-Fact-Sheet_May-2016_FINAL-1.pdf)

<sup>xii</sup> Education Development Center, Inc. 2014 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Report. Waltham: MetroWest Health Foundation; 2015.

<sup>xiii</sup> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. *Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth* [Internet]. Massachusetts; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; 2014 May [cited 2016 Aug 28]. 27 p. Available from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/vrbs/2013report.pdf>

<sup>xiv</sup> Education Development Center, Inc. 2014 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Report. Waltham: MetroWest Health Foundation; 2015.