

Regulation Works!

It's Time for a New Approach to Cannabis



Taxing and regulating cannabis will create thousands of new jobs and bring in millions in tax revenue. In Colorado, a state with a smaller population than Maryland, the state brought in \$200 million in cannabis taxes and fees in 2016. The cannabis industry will also create thousands of good, middle-class jobs for Marylanders; Colorado has more than 30,000 people actively licensed to handle cannabis, plus many more working in related fields.

Cannabis is safer than alcohol. The Institute of Medicine has found cannabis to be far less addictive than alcohol or tobacco. Unlike alcohol, cannabis has never caused a fatal overdose and is not associated with violent crime and domestic violence. Adults should be able to make the safer choice.

Regulation keeps cannabis sales away from schools. Unlike licensed businesses selling liquor or tobacco, sellers of cannabis are pushed underground and operate virtually anywhere. More than 40% of high schoolers know a peer who sells cannabis in school, while less than 1% have a peer who sells alcohol. Regulating cannabis would move sales into a safe, licensed retail stores at least 300 feet away from schools, where workers check ID. The most in-depth surveys suggest modest decreases in rates of youth cannabis use in Colorado and Washington, both of which approved initiatives to regulate cannabis like alcohol in 2012.

Regulation will reduce violence. As with alcohol prohibition in the 1920s, since drug-related disputes can't be solved lawfully, violence is inevitable. As a result, cannabis users and sellers face dangers due to prohibition. In Prince George's County, the Chief of Police has attributed a 25% increase in homicides in 2016 to the lack of a legal supply chain for cannabis.

Prohibition makes control impossible. Prohibition deprives workers and the environment of the legal protections they are entitled to. It also guarantees cannabis won't undergo quality control testing, resulting in possible contamination by pesticides, fertilizers, molds, bacteria, or the lacing of cannabis with other drugs. Regulated retailers will sell only products that have been tested by labs, labeled with their potency, and contain inserts explaining potential dangers and how to recognize problematic use. Edibles will be in opaque, child-proof packaging.

Regulating cannabis in Maryland will fund education and drug treatment. After the costs of regulation are covered, Maryland's cannabis regulation bills would direct half of the revenue to low-income schools through the community schools program. That program is not currently funded, and is unlikely to be without new revenue given the state's \$400 million budget shortfall. Another 25% of the revenue would go to prevention, education, and treatment for addiction. In 2015, Lt. Gov. Rutherford, who led a state task force on the opioid crisis, called for massive amounts of additional spending, but said he was "not sure how we're going to fund this." While the state received some funds from the Affordable Care Act, Maryland will need to replace those funds when it is repealed.

Public education works to address public health concerns. For example, strict regulations on cigarette sales and advertising, plus a robust public education campaign, caused teens' tobacco use to plummet 79% from its peak in 1997. The same can be done for cannabis. In addition, arrests for driving under the influence of cannabis dropped between 2014 and 2015 in Colorado, likely due to public education efforts. Under Maryland's proposal to tax and regulate cannabis, 10% of tax revenues will fund public education and law enforcement training to combat driving under the influence.

Arresting, citing, and prosecuting marijuana offenders diverts police time from serious crime. In 2015, Baltimore's officers only solved 31% of homicides, and in 2016, the rate was still less than 40%. Ending prohibition frees up time and resources to solve violent crimes.

Regulation can also help improve police/ community relationships. A Department of Justice study found that trusting relationships with the local community was one of the most important factors in whether police were effective in solving violent crimes. As Washington, D.C.'s former police chief put it: "All these [marijuana] arrests do is make people hate us."