

February 21, 2023 – HF100



Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

My name is Randy Anderson I'm a person living in long term recovery and what that means to me is, I haven't used drugs, alcohol, or any mood-altering substance since January 9, 2005. I'm a state licensed alcohol & drug counselor, a peer recovery specialist supervisor and a formerly incarcerated individual due to drug related offenses, with that being said, I have significant personal and professional expertise the area of substance use treatment and recovery.

We hear this false dichotomy that there's only two stances on this issue, incarceration, or legalization, which is actually commercialization, and I strongly believe there's a better way forward than incarceration, there's a better way forward than commercialization and we need to be devoting our resources, our time and our energy defining a path between those two extremes.

It's a well-known that when a substance becomes legal the perceived harm, especially with adolescents, is significantly reduced and when perceived harm goes down use increases dramatically. According to one of our nation's leading scientist Dr. Nora Volkow, director at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "The greatest mortality from drugs comes from legal drugs. The moment you make a drug legal, you're going to increase the number of people who get exposed to it, and therefore you increase the negative consequences from its use. When you legalize, you create an industry whose purpose is to make money selling those drugs. And how do you sell it? Mostly by enticing people to take them and entice them to take high quantities."

In the 70s, 80s, and 90s THC levels, THC the main psychoactive compound in marijuana that gives the high sensation, averaged from 2 to 4 percent. By 2014 THC levels hovered around 14 percent, thanks to sophisticated farming and cloning techniques and to the demand of users to get a stronger high more quickly, selective breeding has resulted in an average marijuana potency of 20 percent THC, some strains exceed 30 percent.

Marijuana concentrates and extracts, much more commonly used in the last five plus years, have THC levels that range from 40 to more than 80 percent, that is according to marijuana industry promotional information and Drug Enforcement Administration reports.

Researchers do not yet know the full extent of the consequences when the body and brain (especially the developing brain) are exposed to high concentrations of THC.

According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 90 percent of people with a substance use disorder began using alcohol or other drugs before turning 18.

Regardless of what my state, our state, decides the next steps should be I recommend we move slow and cautiously forward and allow all voices to be heard, for and against the commercialization of marijuana. In closing I would pose the question, what is it we are attempting to accomplish? It's more than obvious that the war on drugs failed so continuing those types of policies benefits no one, however, from a treatment and recovery perspective do we really want to introduce another intoxicating substance and make it more widely available in our communities? Thank you!

Kind regards,

Randy Anderson, RCPF, LADC

Person in Long Term Recovery

Est. January 10, 2005

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"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." – Mark Twain.