

September 14, 2018

Mr. Tom Markus, City Manager
City of Lawrence
6 East 6th Street
PO Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044

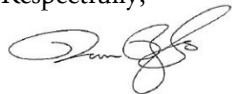
RE: October 9th City Commission Study Session materials related to reducing penalties for the possession of marijuana.

Dear Mr. Markus,

The link between marijuana use and impaired health is becoming clearer every day. Given that what we know about the consequences of marijuana is expanding the Health Department sides with the National Association of County and City Health Officials in urging caution when considering action that may encourage (i.e. reduce barriers) recreational use of marijuana.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. As the City Commission prepares to study the question of reducing penalties for the possession of marijuana. please accept this letter and accompanying information.

Respectfully,



Dan Partridge, RS, MPH
Director

Encl:

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Health Effects of Marijuana

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has published a policy statement to assist health departments considering approaches to medical and recreational cannabis within their communities. The body of scientific evidence around the health effects of marijuana continues to grow, allowing more reliable evidence that could be drawn upon by public health practitioners, lawmakers and others to develop and inform effective laws and policies firmly rooted in science. As such, there is currently a need to exercise the precautionary principle (the principle that the introduction of a new product or process whose ultimate effects are disputed or unknown should be resisted) when considering approaches and policies related to marijuana use within the community.

<https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/17-06-Medical-and-Recreational-Cannabis-and-Cannabinoids.pdf>, September 2018

Summary of CDC Research Findings

Addiction and Brain Development

Marijuana is not a benign substance. Over the past few decades, the amount of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in marijuana has increased and the higher the THC content, the stronger the potential negative effects on the brain, such as problems with attention, memory and learning.

The full extent of the consequences of exposure to high concentrations of THC is not known. The effects of how increases in potency may increase the risk of someone becoming addicted is not fully known. It is estimated that about 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted. For people who begin using before the age of 18, that number rises to 1 in 6.

Marijuana affects not only brain function but brain development. The damaging effects of marijuana are more susceptible on developing brains, like those in babies, children, and teenagers. When marijuana users begin using as teenagers, the drug may reduce memory and learning functions and affect how the brain builds connections between the areas necessary for these functions.

Marijuana use has also been linked to depression and anxiety, and suicide among teens. However, it is not known whether this is a causal relationship or simply an association.

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Cardiovascular Impacts

Smoke from marijuana contains many of the same toxins, irritants, and carcinogens as tobacco smoke. Smoking marijuana can also lead to a greater risk of bronchitis, cough, and phlegm production.

Using marijuana makes the heart beat faster. It could also lead to increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

More research is needed to understand the full impact of marijuana use on the circulatory system to determine if marijuana use leads to higher risk of death from these causes.

Additional Public Health Considerations

Lawrence Municipal Court requires any person who is convicted of a charge or who is diverted on a charge alleging a violation of possession of marijuana to obtain a drug abuse evaluation. The purpose of assessment is to get an accurate picture of the individual's marijuana use.

The addiction assessment is a biopsychosocial evaluation and assessment. This type of drug and alcohol assessment takes into account information from a person's biology, psychological make-up, and social interactions to assess the severity of an individual's addiction.

The assessment assists in determining what level of substance abuse education or counseling is most appropriate for that individual, in an effort to provide the most impactful experience possible potentially reducing the likelihood of the defendant returning to the criminal justice system.

<https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects.html>, September 2018

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