

Dear Lawmaker,

As you are set to consider a bill to legalize the commercial sale of marijuana, I would respectfully ask you to consider the following: the commercialization of marijuana is a policy that results in devastating consequences for public health and safety.

First and foremost, the marijuana industry has never been interested in selling the 5% potency THC weed of Woodstock. The products being marketed by the pot industry today are much more potent. The marijuana flower being sold now contains up to 40% THC, the chemical in marijuana that gets you high. But what should be more concerning to all of us are the 99% THC concentrates: waxes, shatters, and dabs; and the edibles: gummy bears, ice creams, sodas, and cookies that the industry is creating.

These products are marketed in kid-friendly ways with colorful packaging and made to look like popular treats. The industry wants young people to use their products because they know that research has shown that the younger a person is when they begin using marijuana, the more likely they are to develop an addiction to it.

They are sadly succeeding on this front.

New data out of Colorado shows us that these highly potent edibles are ending up in the hands of children. After legalization, calls to the poison center have skyrocketed, with the accidental ingestion of edibles by children under the age of nine [comprising 65%](#) of these calls. Another study recently published in the *Lancet Psychiatry* found that use of these highly potent products is linked to greater rates of severe mental illness such as psychosis. Additionally, youth use rates in “legal” states are [continually higher](#) than the national average.

The industry is also preying on another vulnerable group – pregnant mothers.

Last year, an undercover study found that [70% of marijuana shops](#) in Colorado were recommending their highly potent pot to “treat” symptoms of morning sickness. The normalization of marijuana that is occurring right now has resulted in a [75% increase in marijuana use](#) during pregnancy. This is even more concerning in light of a recent study that found marijuana use during pregnancy can increase the risk the child will develop psychosis later in life.

The industry also frequently targets disadvantaged communities as its profit centers. In Los Angeles, the [majority of pot shops](#) have opened in primarily African-American communities and in Colorado, where pot shops outnumber McDonalds and Starbucks locations combined, they are [disproportionately located](#) in similar areas. And arrest disparities continue while less than one percent of the industry is minority-owned. This is supposed to be social justice?

Our nation is currently in the midst of a disastrous epidemic of addiction. Opioids now kill more Americans than car crashes. While this is occurring, promoters of Big Marijuana are claiming that the drug can be used as a substitute for opioids. Evidence proves otherwise. A four-year study in the [Lancet](#) found that marijuana use had no positive impact on opioid use or reduced prescribing. Additionally, research has found that marijuana users reported more pain on average and required more opioid medication to deal with pain.

Quite simply, addiction is causing mass devastation in our country. And the peddlers of addiction are wasting no time in cashing in on pot. Altria, a Big Tobacco giant, recently invested billions into a marijuana growing company. Constellation Brands, the country's largest beer importer, [invested \\$5 billion](#) into Canopy Growth, a Canadian marijuana company with aims to create marijuana-infused drinks. Furthermore, the [former CEO of Purdue Pharma](#), the company responsible for the deceptive marketing of OxyContin, recently went on to head up a marijuana company in Canada.

If lawmakers can see beyond the fabric of lies being woven by the marijuana industry's well-heeled lobbyists, they will see marijuana legalization efforts for what they are: addiction-for-profit companies looking for the next big payday. We must put public health and safety – and our kids - ahead of the interests of Big Marijuana.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Patrick J. Kennedy
Co-Founder,
Smart Approaches to Marijuana