

## Calculating the Costs of Marijuana Legalization: One New Resource & One Warning About the Deceptive Tactics of the Marijuana Industry

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We have to ask the right questions.

Right now, state budget talks dominate the conversation at our Harrisburg Capitol. Governor Josh Shapiro has made marijuana legalization part of that debate, proposing a 20% wholesale tax on the “recreational” sale of marijuana.

The critical question for Pennsylvania as it considers commercializing another addictive substance is this: **What are the costs?**

During a recent budget hearing, PA State Senator Cris Dush (R-Jefferson) asked that very question to the PA Budget Secretary Zach Reber:

"Are there any states where the costs don't exceed the revenues?"

Secretary Reber's response? "I haven't specifically looked at that."

That's a problem. Our lawmakers should understand the real-world consequences of states experimenting with broad marijuana legalization, including the public health, safety, and economic costs tied to increased commercialization and use.

Thanks to your help, PA Family has warned about these costs for years while pushing back against the marijuana lobby's addiction-for-profit agenda. New research now estimates that Pennsylvania could face a host of annual costs if it moves beyond the medical use of marijuana, including:

- **\$135 million in public social costs** related to emergency healthcare services, substance abuse programs, marijuana-related DUIs, and chronic homelessness.
- **\$20 million in private productivity losses**, related to absenteeism and other workplace issues.

And those figures may only scratch the surface. Pennsylvania families would bear the human and financial costs if the marijuana industry gained greater opportunities to expand access to their addictive products, particularly among young people.

In his book, *How Should We Then Live?*, Dr. Francis Schaeffer wrote the following observation:

"People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of those presuppositions than even they themselves may realize."

Too many people, including some state lawmakers, still view marijuana through the lens of decades past. But today's marijuana is not the low-potency “Woodstock weed” of a previous generation. Big Marijuana has purposely engineered high-potency THC products that deliver far more intense effects - and fuel more addiction - that are creating a host of new challenges for public health and safety.

We already face serious challenges involving youth addiction and mental health. Do we really want to make those problems worse?

Addictive marijuana use is at an all-time high. Do we really think more commercialization will help?

All this said, there's both good news and bad news – along with one important way you can help right now.

- Good news: Thanks to key leadership roles in the PA Senate, efforts to legalize marijuana for recreational use in Pennsylvania have been held back despite intense lobbying from the marijuana industry.
- Bad news: A new threat has emerged because of the current roadblock in the PA Senate to the marijuana lobby. Big Marijuana's lobbyists have changed their tactics and are now pushing parts of its agenda through Senate Bill 49. As one industry advocate put it, "We can beat them with Senate Bill 49."
- How you can help: Please contact your State Senator and State Representative about your concerns with Senate Bill 49, and recruit others to do the same. [Click here to contact them by email.](#)

[Click Here to Take Action](#)

It would be wise for Pennsylvania lawmakers to count the costs of marijuana legalization. Who will pay the price for more commercialization? **Families pay the price. Communities pay the price. Employers pay the price. Children often pay the price most of all.**

Pennsylvania should not repeat the mistakes that we can already see unfolding elsewhere.

Thank you for staying informed and engaged in issues like this.

Sincerely,



**Dan Bartkowiak**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
*Pennsylvania Family Council*

P.S. Pennsylvania's Primary Election is next Tuesday, May 19th. Local and state elections matter more than many people realize, especially on issues impacting families, children, education, and public policy. An informed voter is an effective voter. Be sure you're prepared before heading to the polls by visiting [pafamilyvoter.com](http://pafamilyvoter.com).

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