THE MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ENDORSES SAM MAINE MISSION TO RAISE AWARENESS ON MARIJUANA ISSUES

The Maine Public Health Association officially declares its support of SAM Maine and its goals to educate Mainers on the science of today’s marijuana and to warn them of the social costs Big Marijuana would bring to Maine.

LEWISTON – Friday, the Maine Public Health Association formally declared its alignment and partnership with SAM Maine (Smart Approaches to Marijuana), the Maine affiliate of Project SAM. MPHA endorses the four main goals of SAM Maine while and is in agreement that a policy of marijuana legalization would not solve any associated issues, but would instead create or increase existing public health problems.

"We join SAM Maine in rejecting a policy of marijuana legalization that would bring Big Marijuana to Maine.” commented MPHA Executive Director, Tina Pettingill. “We believe that establishing another legal drug industry in Maine will only increase the massive social and healthcare costs”

This announcement comes shortly after the release of the results of the 2013 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. While Maine saw decreases in other categories of substance abuse such as inhalants and prescription drugs, the numbers for marijuana remained flat in both middle and high school. About

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22% of Maine high school students and 4.4% of middle school youth reported using marijuana.

What’s more concerning to public health leaders in Maine is yet another rise in the percentage of youth who believe there are no risks from regular marijuana use. Over half, 52%, of Maine high school students believe regular marijuana use poses no risks to youth, this is up from 40% in 2009. A growing number of high school youth in Maine report having parents who believe it would be okay for youth to use marijuana, up to 15% in 2013.

“We are very concerned about these numbers and believe that the normalized and mixed messages from the legalization campaigns have contributed to these perceptions.” observed SAM Maine State Coordinator, Scott Gagnon. “The science is very clear on the negative impacts of marijuana to the physical health, brain development, and future success of youth. SAM Maine will be working hard to ensure parents and other adults in our communities are fully aware of these proven risks.”

Project SAM, has four main goals:

• To inform public policy with the science of today’s marijuana.

• To prevent the establishment of “Big Marijuana” — and a 21st-Century tobacco industry that would market marijuana to children.

• To promote research of marijuana’s medical properties and produce, non-smoked, non-psychoactive pharmacy-attainable medications.

• To have an adult conversation about reducing the unintended consequences of current marijuana policies, such as lifelong stigma due to arrest.

Research shows that teens who smoke marijuana have a 1 in 6 chance of becoming addicted and can have significantly lower levels of IQ later in life.

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About Project SAM

Project SAM is a nonpartisan alliance of lawmakers, scientists and other concerned citizens who want to move beyond simplistic discussions of “incarceration versus legalization” when discussing marijuana use and instead focus on practical changes in marijuana policy that neither demonizes users nor legalizes the drug. Project SAM has taken its initiative

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to other parts of the United States including California, Colorado, Vermont, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Ohio, and other jurisdictions.