

July 6, 2016

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Chairperson, Democratic National Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Governor Dannel Malloy
Co-chair, DNC Platform Committee
Connecticut State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Shirley Franklin
Co-chair, DNC Platform Committee
CEO, Purpose Built Communities
3445 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 175
Atlanta, Georgia 30326

VIA EMAIL AND FAX

Re: Legalizing Marijuana Should Not Be Part of the DNC Platform

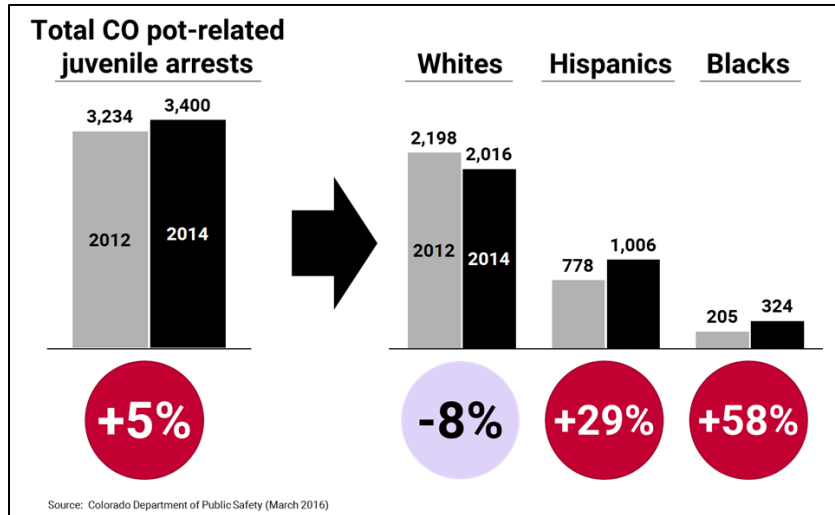
Dear Representative Wasserman Schultz, Governor Malloy, and Former Mayor Franklin:

We represent tens of thousands of people working in drug prevention, mental health, treatment, medicine, criminal justice reform, and millions of individuals in recovery from alcohol and drug dependence. We write to express our concern with certain voices that advocate for modifying the platform of the Democratic Party to include some variant of marijuana legalization or the complete removal of marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act. We also understand that the draft platform document states that:

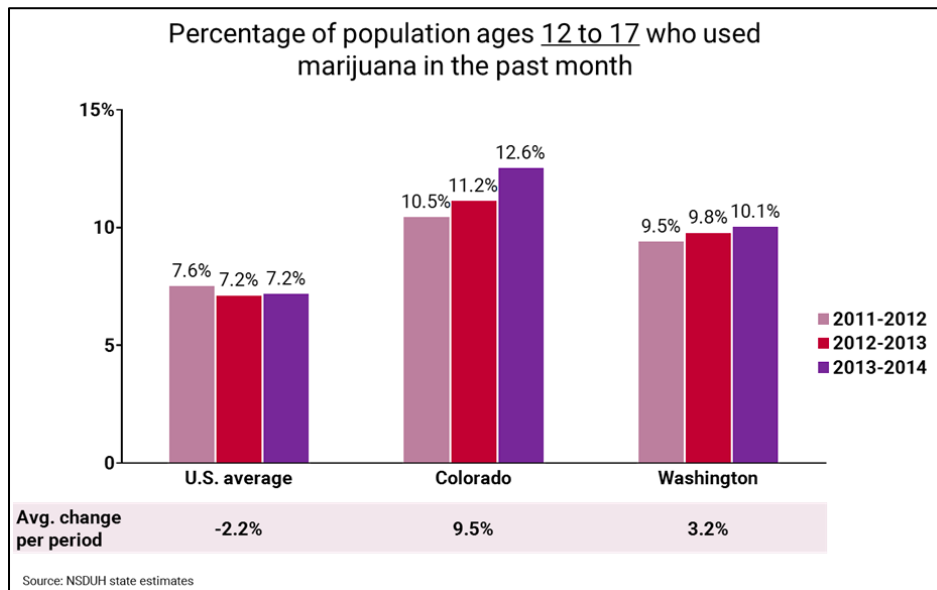
We believe that the states should be laboratories of democracy on the issue of marijuana, and those states that want to decriminalize marijuana should be able to do so. We support policies that will allow more research to be done on marijuana, as well as reforming our laws to allow legal marijuana businesses to exist without uncertainty. And we recognize our current marijuana laws have had an unacceptable disparate impact, with arrest rates for marijuana possession among African-Americans far outstripping arrest rates among whites despite similar usage rates

While we agree that more legitimate medical research on marijuana should be done, and that racial disparities in law enforcement should be addressed, **we urge you not to view legalization and commercialization of marijuana as a solution to these serious matters.** We are united in our belief, consistent with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and current Food and Drug Administration (FDA)/Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)/National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) efforts that although marijuana's components should be vigorously studied for possible (non-smoked) medication development, turning pot into a third mass-produced addictive substance alongside alcohol and tobacco will only aggravate the problems the DNC seeks to address.

First of all, legalization has already triggered serious consequences in the states of Colorado and Washington State. Of most concern for those interested in racial justice, **legalization has resulted in huge spikes in arrests of Colorado youth from communities of color**—up 29% among Hispanics from 2012 (pre-legalization) to 2014 (post-legalization), and up 58% among Black youth in the same timeframe—while arrests of White children fell:



This massive increase in juvenile arrests tracks national survey data indicating that youth use rates are well above national averages in CO and WA, and rising much faster than the rest of the nation:



Other negative consequences include:

- A doubling of the percentage of marijuana-related traffic fatalities in Washington in just one year after legalization (2013 to 2014);
- Huge spikes in emergency poison control calls related to marijuana from 2013 to 2014 in both Colorado and Washington (72% and 56%, respectively); and
- A 15% average annual increase in drug and narcotics crime in Denver since 2014, when retail sales of marijuana began.

Second, the marijuana industry is developing along the same lines as the tobacco industry of the 20th century, targeting youth and communities of color while lobbying against any regulation. For example, pot businesses in Denver have concentrated in minority areas, with one such neighborhood featuring one marijuana business for every 47 residents.

They also target youth by heavily marketing edible marijuana products like candy lollipops and gummy bears. These products, like the ones below, now comprise about 50% of the Colorado marijuana market.



Third, the pot lobby has successfully fought off Colorado's attempts to regulate advertising targeting children, rules restricting the use of pesticides, and rules to cap potency. And this same lobby has included provisions in some of the marijuana legalization initiatives being considered in 2016 that would pack state oversight boards with industry representatives. This "Big Marijuana" assault on health and safety regulations is no less than a repeat of Big Tobacco's tactics from the 1960s and 1970s.

Finally, we note that daily marijuana use has tripled among 12th graders nationwide over the past 20 years. Kids today are getting the idea that marijuana is safe because of mixed messages surrounding marijuana legalization, despite the fact that the American Medical Association and other scientific groups oppose such efforts and are concerned with the drug's public health impact.

To conclude, we believe that we should break down the barriers of research into marijuana's components by making it easier for researchers to access and store such components. We are encouraged by, and fully support, for example, the current studies in the context of childhood epilepsy. But we remain gravely worried about the impacts of today's sophisticated, commercialized, multibillion dollar marijuana industry. Moreover, we are concerned with the lack of any systematic, national assessment on the consequences of these state-level "experiments." **Please do not legitimize Big Marijuana further; rather, we urge you to place public health and social justice over industry profits.**

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Kennedy
Honorary Advisor, SAM (Smart Approaches to Marijuana)



Kevin A. Sabet, PhD
Co-Founder & President, SAM (Smart Approaches to Marijuana)



Jeffrey Zinsmeister
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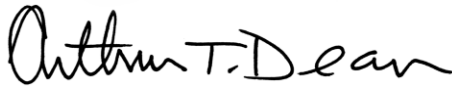
Howard Samuels
CEO, The Hills Treatment Center; Board Member, SAM



Dr. Robert L. DuPont, MD
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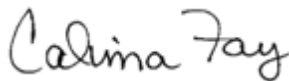
Pamela F. Rodriguez
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Arthur T. Dean, Major General, US Army, Retired
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Sue Rusche
President & CEO, National Families in Action (NFIA)

//s// [consent to sign provided electronically]

Ann Bray
President and CEO, Phoenix House



Cynthia Moreno Touhy
Executive Director, National Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC)



Patty McCarthy Metcalf
Executive Director, Faces & Voices of Recovery

cc: Members of the DNC Platform Committee