

December 18, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

I write today in support of the First Step Act, but in opposition to the Gardner recreational marijuana legalization amendment. Senator Gardner's amendment would federally legalize 99% potency concentrates, and candies and gummies that are sold not only in Colorado, but are being illegally shipped all over the country. These new, high-potency products are nothing like Woodstock weed and are initiating a new generation of kids and teens to an addictive substance that has been shown to [lower IQ](#) and [motivation to succeed](#).



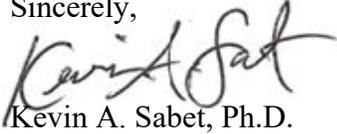
Unfortunately, legalization has served as a cover for international cartels to move into legalized states and set up operations. Exposés from [NBC](#) and [Rocky Mountain PBS](#) show how cartels purchase or rent suburban houses, convert them into grow operations, and ship the product [all over the country](#). This has led to an increase in gang activity and deadly violence, with [violent crime up](#) in Denver and across the state.

In Colorado, the addiction-for-profit marijuana industry is making the addiction crisis worse. While deaths from prescription opioid overdose are down due to measures taken to combat the opioid crisis, deaths from heroin and other drugs have more than filled the gap, leading to the [most overdose deaths](#) in Colorado history. Scientific studies show that those who have abused marijuana are [more than twice as likely](#) to abuse prescription opioids or initiate non-medical use of opioids.

Further, Senator Gardner has chosen to stand up for an industry that was [caught marketing marijuana to pregnant women](#). Studies show that THC crosses the placenta, affects the developing brain of the fetus, and is linked with potentially [fatal birth defects](#). Colorado has yet to take any enforcement action against the dispensaries that were caught.

The First Step Act is an important bill, reforming our criminal justice system with an opportunity for treatment, recovery, redemption, and rehabilitation. SAM Action shares these goals, and they form the basis for our own criminal justice reform proposals. Senator Gardner's recreational marijuana legalization amendment would work against those goals by giving a massive boost to a predatory industry. I urge you to reject this amendment and preserve the First Step Act.

Sincerely,



Kevin A. Sabet, Ph.D.

President
SAM Action