

August 3, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Room S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Booker  
Senator From New Jersey  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Senator From Oregon  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Oppose the Commercialization and Mass Marketing of High-Potency Marijuana**

Dear Leader Schumer, Senator Booker, and Senator Wyden,

We, the undersigned organizations representing concerned parents, public health professionals, members of law enforcement, treatment and recovery professionals, members of faith communities, and members of drug prevention communities, write to strongly oppose the Cannabis Administration & Opportunity Act.

The Cannabis Administration & Opportunity Act, as introduced, would **not only decriminalize marijuana, but fully legalize and commercialize the drug.** This bill would allow major corporations to deepen their existing investments in the marijuana industry and solidify their grasp on the market. To consolidate the industry and grow their market share, the largest companies are following the playbook of Big Tobacco, prioritizing their self-interest over the well-being of their customers.

Allowing a corporate takeover of the marijuana industry would be harmful for our nation as we continue to grapple with a global pandemic, along with a crippling opioid crisis. The legalization of marijuana will surely harm population health and exacerbate health-related disparities. The latest research on marijuana and its consequences should bring us all pause:

- National legalization would result in [6,800 additional deaths](#) from marijuana-impaired drivers.
- Illicit markets have thrived in every ‘legal’ state, such as Oregon, where illegal marijuana makes up [more than 70%](#) of the market.
- The for-profit marijuana industry targets kids, both offline and on social media.
- Marijuana use has been linked to mental illnesses, ranging from [anxiety](#) and [depression](#) to [schizophrenia](#) and [psychosis](#), and even [suicidal](#) thoughts, especially among youth.

- [3 in 10](#) users will develop a cannabis use disorder.
- Research has found users of marijuana are more likely to [misuse prescription opioids](#). Though the majority of those using marijuana won't go on to other drugs, more than 95% of those using heroin and cocaine started with marijuana.
- Marijuana use can severely [impact brain development](#) in youth, leading to lower IQ and worse mental health, academic, and professional outcomes.
- With a for-profit industry marketing in a variety of ways, more pregnant women than ever are using marijuana, resulting in [severe consequences](#) for newborns.
- Marijuana is the most commonly used [illicit drug](#); legalization would normalize it, decrease risk perceptions, and result in higher rates of use.
- The opening of dispensaries is associated with [increases in usage rates](#) and cannabis use disorder, especially for young adults.
- Marijuana use can cause [cardiovascular harm](#).
- The use of marijuana [by a parent](#) increases the likelihood that their child will use marijuana and view it favorably.
- Marijuana users are [nearly 25% more likely](#) than non-users to be hospitalized.

The Cannabis Administration & Opportunity Act contains virtually no public health guardrails. If passed, the bill would legalize high-potency products that would appeal to youth. Any form of advertising would be allowed, including on television during the Super Bowl. This bill will put the nation at risk for a public health crisis, with our children being the unwitting subjects of this multi-billion dollar addiction experiment.

Moreover, the Cannabis Administration & Opportunity Act will fail to advance social justice, despite the assurances of the bill's supporters. Although many states tout equity initiatives, **the marijuana industry is less than 4% Black-owned**. Additionally, pot shops are disproportionately located in communities of color, where their harms are concentrated among vulnerable populations. This bill does nothing to solve this problem other than provide fuel for the fire of another addiction-for-profit industry.

We need to reform our approach to marijuana laws, but this legislation would only make matters worse. Do not mistake the need for reform as the need to encourage and promote addictive drugs that will further harm our communities—our families and our kids don't need more marijuana. We want prevention and treatment services for our youth, not a new industry that targets them.

As Americans on the front lines in the battle against opioid and drug addiction, and on the side of treatment and prevention, we write to strongly oppose Cannabis Administration & Opportunity Act.

Sincerely,

American Society of Addiction Medicine  
NAACP-Illinois

Rosenthal Center  
Eagle Forum  
National Drug & Alcohol Screening Association  
Student Assistance Services Corp  
Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.  
Family Research Council  
National Families in Action  
Resilient Futures Network  
Mothers Against Prescription Drug Abuse  
Community Anti- Drug Coalitions of America  
Family Policy Alliance  
Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee  
Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University  
Save Our Society From Drugs  
Drug Free America Foundation, Inc.  
Americans Against Legalizing Marijuana