



United States Senate

First St SE, Washington, DC 20004

November 22, 2022

Dear Senator,

We represent a diverse coalition of medical professionals, addiction treatment providers, drug prevention organizations, law enforcement, communities of faith, and public policy advocacy organizations who are deeply concerned with our country's present addiction crisis. We write to urge you to prevent the passage of measures that would expand the promotion and advertising of increased marijuana use, like the SAFE Banking Act (H.R. 1996, S. 910).

To put it simply, the passage of this piece of legislation would allow institutional investors to greatly expand the marijuana industry and counter public health measures. The marijuana industry does not need more access to money, which would allow them to advertise, promote, and commercialize their super-strength THC products.

When Canada legalized marijuana in 2018, the Big Tobacco giant Altria invested \$1.8 billion in the industry.¹ The Big Alcohol conglomerate Constellation Brands invested \$4 billion. These companies see marijuana as the new frontier in the addiction-for-profit industry. They know that the new high-potency marijuana is fundamentally different from anything that existed before. Today, about 3 in 10 marijuana users develop a marijuana use disorder.² It's also been well documented that 80% of marijuana consumption is made up by just 20% of users.³

¹ Paul R. La Monica, "Marlboro Owner Altria Invests \$1.8 Billion in Cannabis Company Cronos | CNN Business," CNN (Cable News Network, December 7, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/07/investing/altria-cronos-investment-marijuana>.

² National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Is Marijuana Addictive?," National Institutes of Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 13, 2021), <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>.

³ Mark A. Kleiman and Jeremy Ziskind, "Lawful Access to Cannabis: Gains, Losses and Design Criteria," *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development* 1, no. 3 (2019): pp. 272-278, <https://doi.org/10.31389/jied.41>.

It is a myth that marijuana dispensaries are cash-only businesses: hundreds of banks and credit unions across the country already provide banking services to the marijuana industry.⁴ SAFE Banking will not alleviate the safety concerns of marijuana business as most criminals break in to steal the lucrative marijuana products, not cash.

This legislation would not help communities of color, in fact, less than 2% of the entire marijuana industry is Black-owned, while most marijuana shops are in these communities.⁵ Instead, companies like Altria and Constellation Brands stand to benefit the most. Currently, they are barred from investing in the American marijuana industry. The SAFE Banking Act would remove all barriers to entry for their investment.

The influx of billions of dollars in the American marijuana industry would only help marijuana companies promote the drug more. Many of the products sold in the legal market are overtly made to be attractive to youth. There was a 1557% increase in exposures to edible marijuana among children under 12 from 2016 to 2020. Most of those cases were among children 5 and under.⁶ The SAFE Banking Act has no guardrails for public health and would only help the industry encourage more young people to try marijuana.

It would be irresponsible to change the law in ways that encourage increased investment in the marijuana industry without any guardrails for public health, particularly when no other legislation regulating the public health impact of marijuana is likely to pass.

Thank you for your consideration.

⁴ Tiffany Kary, "Cannabis Banking Is Booming Despite Federal Uncertainty," Bloomberg (Bloomberg, January 18, 2022), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-01-18/marijuana-banking-is-moving-forward-despite-federal-uncertainty>.

⁵ Amiah Taylor, "Black Cannabis Entrepreneurs Account for Less than 2% of the Nation's Marijuana Businesses," Fortune (Fortune, April 26, 2022), <https://fortune.com/2022/04/26/black-cannabis-entrepreneurs-marijuana-businesses-marijuana-laws/>.

⁶ Christina Caron, "More Young Kids Are Getting Sick From Cannabis Edibles," The New York Times (The New York Times, January 14, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/14/well/family/marijuana-edibles-children.html>.



Sincerely,

Smart Approaches to Marijuana Action (SAM Action)

Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee

NAACP Illinois State Conference

National Sheriffs' Association

Family Research Council

Family Policy Alliance

Parent Action Network

Drug Free America Foundation, Inc.

National Drug & Alcohol Screening Association (NDASA)

National Families in Action

Creating Lasting Family Connections

Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.

Eagle Forum

Rosenthal Center for Addiction Studies

Lake Plains Medical PLLC