

2025

SAM Smart Approaches to Marijuana
preventing another big tobacco

Annual Report

The Leader on Marijuana Policy



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Letter from the President and Chairman

This past year marked a turning point for SAM. As the national conversation around marijuana and intoxicating hemp products intensified, our organization continued to serve as a trusted, science-driven voice committed to protecting families, informing policymakers, and promoting public health. From federal action to state-level advocacy to national education campaigns, 2025 brought some of the most significant achievements in our history.

At the federal level, SAM secured a landmark victory as Congress advanced language, written and championed by our team, to finally close the dangerous hemp THC loophole and send it to the President's desk. This critical step will help end the era of unregulated "gas-station weed" and restore the original intent of the Farm Bill. We also released a widely supported coalition letter, co-signed by leading prevention groups, medical professionals, and law-enforcement partners, urging the President not to reschedule marijuana. This effort reaffirmed bipartisan recognition that federal drug policy must be guided by science and public health, not the profit-motives of Big Marijuana.

On the state front, SAM launched one of its most ambitious public education campaigns to date in New York. This multi-platform effort highlighted the escalating harms tied to high-potency THC products and exposed the failures of commercialization. Through compelling personal testimony, extensive media engagement, and new research, the New York campaign elevated the real human cost of today's THC marketplace and reached audiences that had never encountered SAM's work before.

One of our most personally meaningful 2025 milestones was the opening of SAM's new headquarters in Washington, DC. Located just steps from the Hart Senate Office Building, this space places our team at the center of federal decision making and strengthens our already close relationships with members of Congress and the presidential administration. These new offices will allow us to host briefings, convene with national partners, and welcome advocates from around the country, ensuring SAM is positioned to guide policy discussions at the highest levels.

Our national grassroots network continued to grow in reach and influence. Through the Parent Action Network and our state affiliates, we trained hundreds of families to share their experiences with clarity and purpose. These advocates played a central role in defeating harmful proposals, advancing youth protections, and ensuring that lawmakers hear directly from the people most impacted by marijuana commercialization. Their courage remains one of the driving forces behind SAM's mission.

As we look ahead, we know that 2026 will bring new debates, new political dynamics, and renewed pressure from the marijuana industry. But thanks to the strength of our partnerships and the resolve of the communities we serve, we are prepared to meet whatever challenges come next. SAM remains committed to championing evidence-based policy, elevating prevention, and standing with families across the nation.

Thank you for your unwavering support. Together, we will continue building a healthier and safer future for all,



Kevin A. Sabet, PhD
President & CEO
SAM & SAM Action



Jon Talcott, JD
Chairman
SAM

Impact on Capitol Hill

The past year marked the most active and successful period for SAM's government affairs department in our organization's history. The team we've assembled has decades of experience working in both Democratic and Republican politics.

Our wins are the result of a decade's worth of work building relationships on Capitol Hill, fine-tuning our policy expertise, and developing an advanced political operation. And we're just getting started.



SAM CEO Dr. Kevin A. Sabet delivers remarks in favor of Randy's Resolution alongside Congressman Pete Sessions and Senator Pete Ricketts

50+

Members of Congress signed SAM-authored anti-marijuana letters

10

SAM priorities included in Congressional appropriations bills

1

SAM-drafted bill signed into law (hemp-THC ban)

0

We have lost zero legislative battles!

SAM had a larger presence on Capitol Hill in 2025 than any other year in our organization's history. We have continued our offensive strategy and lifted our lobbying efforts to a whole new level.

Our government affairs team’s most notable achievements were in this year’s appropriations process. With government funding battles heating up, the powerful pro-pot Appropriations Subcommittee Chair David Joyce (R-OH) inserted marijuana banking provisions into a must-pass bill. SAM immediately assembled a coalition of public health advocates both on and off the Hill. Our efforts were successful, resulting in Chairman Joyce offering a motion to remove the marijuana banking language from his own bill. SAFE Banking did not receive a single vote in either chamber of Congress this year.

We also secured more than 10 key legislative priorities in Committee-passed appropriations bills. In the DOJ funding bill, SAM worked with partners on the Hill to insert provisions blocking marijuana rescheduling and allowing federal law enforcement to shut down pot shops that are within 1000 feet of a school zone. In both the FDA and Labor, Health and Human Services funding bills, the Appropriations Committee inserted a provision requested by SAM urging the FDA to conduct more research on the harms of marijuana, including its detrimental effects on teen brains and mental health.



SAM CEO Dr. Kevin A. Sabet addresses a crowd of Capitol Hill staff at a SAM Hill briefing



Rep. Mary Miller (R-IL) addresses the crowd at the 2025 SAM Good Drug Policy Summit



SAM’s CEO Dr. Kevin A. Sabet, EVP Luke Niforatos, Government Affairs Director Jordan Davidson, and Rep. Jeff Hurd

Advancing legislation to ban Delta-8 THC and other hemp intoxicants in the Farm Bill was one of SAM’s top legislative priorities in 2025. Just weeks before the House Agriculture Committee was set to vote on the Farm Bill, SAM’s lobbying team met with Rep. Mary Miller (R-IL), a member of the committee who had never heard about Delta-8 THC. By the end of the meeting, our team got Rep. Miller to agree to be our champion. Rep. Miller introduced an amendment to the Farm Bill banning dangerous hemp intoxicants, which was voted upon favorably by a bipartisan majority of committee members. SAM also worked with Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Andy Harris (R-MD) to successfully include the “Miller Amendment” in his appropriations bill. Unfortunately, Congress decided to punt the Farm Bill another year. The good news is that all the groundwork we completed in 2025 has set us up to ban hemp intoxicants once and for all when the Farm Bill does move in 2026.

Rescheduling

In 2023, the FDA sent their flawed marijuana rescheduling review that recommended reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug to the DEA. The review defied decades of accepted drug scheduling evaluation practices and was clearly motivated by an affinity to politics, not science. SAM leaped into action to oppose this misguided action. We began by developing key resources, such as our rebuttal to the HHS rationale for rescheduling, to inform decision makers and the public about the harms of rescheduling and the flawed process. We also retained a law firm run by former Attorney General Bill Barr to help guide us through the rescheduling process.

Our lawyer, former Deputy White House Counsel Pat Philbin, and his colleagues have worked with us to make SAM the leading voice opposing rescheduling. We submitted a public comment totaling nearly 30,000 words to the federal government expressing our opposition to rescheduling, making our submission longer than the DEA's own response to rescheduling. On December 2nd, the Administrative Law Hearing on rescheduling began. Prior to the start of the hearing, SAM and our team of lawyers made the case to the court that we should receive standing in the case. The judge agreed with our petition, and included us in the hearings (notably, most of the pro-marijuana groups were denied).

SAM's efforts to oppose rescheduling also extend to Capitol Hill. This year, we have worked with members of Congress to advance legislation that blocks rescheduling and write letters opposing rescheduling.

In the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee, we collaborated with Chairman Hal Rogers (KY-5) to insert a provision preventing the DOJ from rescheduling marijuana into the bill. We also got rescheduling priorities included in several other appropriations bills, including a demand for an Inspector General investigation into the flawed HHS rescheduling review.

In February, the House Chairman of the FDA Appropriations Subcommittee Andy Harris (MD-1) sent a SAM-drafted letter to the DEA urging them to consider the true harms of marijuana before deciding on rescheduling. In March, we asked Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT) to lead a letter to the DEA highlighting his concerns with marijuana rescheduling and its implications for our international treaty obligations. It has been established since the 1970s by federal courts and the DEA that reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III would limit the United States' ability to comply with drug control obligations outlined in the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Senator Romney, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote a letter expressing his concerns and secured the signatures of Senate Foreign Relations Ranking Member Jim Risch (R-ID) and Senator Pete Ricketts (R-NE). In May, Reps. Andrew Clyde (GA-9) and Ben Cline (VA-6) wrote to the DEA Administrator asking why the DEA did not sign off on the marijuana rescheduling recommendation. SAM urged Congressman Clyde to ask the DEA Administrator questions at a Congressional hearing, which subsequently led to the follow-up letter. In July, Senator James Lankford and Congressman Pete Sessions led another letter opposing rescheduling. SAM edited the letter and secured member sign on. Notably, Senate Majority Whip John Thune (R-SD) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), the two leading candidates to become the next Republican Leader, signed on.

Impact on People

SAM's grassroots initiative, the Parent Action Network (PAN), continued to grow as we welcomed hundreds of new parent advocates from across the country. Through initiatives such as our survey, podcast, direct advocacy campaigns, important alerts, monthly newsletter and webinar series, and resource sharing, PAN worked to educate and engage parents to share their stories and advocate for better drug policies.



PAN Parents prepare to take on the Hill at the annual PAN Training and Hill Day

30,000

PAN parents contacted their legislators and other community stakeholders more than 30,000 times in 2025, sharing their stories and turning their grief into action.

350+

In 2024, more than 350 parents participated in media trainings, interviews, awareness and education campaigns.

38

PAN's vetted and actively engaged parents now cover 38 of 50 states

With the help of SAM's communication team, PAN has continued to elevate the stories of the families whose lives have been impacted by marijuana use and delta-8 THC. The 2025 PAN Conference and Hill Day welcomed twice the number of parents as 2024's training as more and more parents are empowered to step up and tell their stories. Not only did the PAN stories educate and change the minds of lawmakers, but parents applied their skills to enact change in their own states. PAN's Training Conference and Hill Day brought parents together to experience real connection, relevance, and support by sharing their stories and leaning on each other for support. As we move forward, PAN will continue relationship building by bringing more parents to Capitol Hill and by connecting parents so that they can support each other in their journeys.

Where We Worked

In 2025, SAM team members provided hundreds of speaking events both in-person and virtually. We traveled to 40 plus states, Washington, D.C. and 7 countries outside the United States, to provide educational presentations on how the legalization of marijuana has been negatively affecting our communities.

In February, we welcomed hundreds of advocates to National Harbor, MD where we convened the 2025 SAM Good Drug Policy Summit. Attendees heard from various advocates and our partners on how we can scale up drug policy solutions by educating decision-makers and the public about ways to harness science to prevent drug use, treat addiction, and forge pathways to recovery. Speakers included:

- Congresswoman Mary Miller, U.S. Representative (IL-15)
- Ben Cort, President/Managing Partner, NRT Behavioral Health, SAM Board Member
- Dr. Bertha K. Madras, Harvard Medical School, McLean Hospital
- Dr. Barbara Bazron: Director, DC Department of Behavioral Health
- Amy Ronshausen, Executive Director, Drug Free America Foundation



Rep. Mary Miller (IL-15) accepts the SAM Legislator of the Year Award for her work to close the hemp loophole

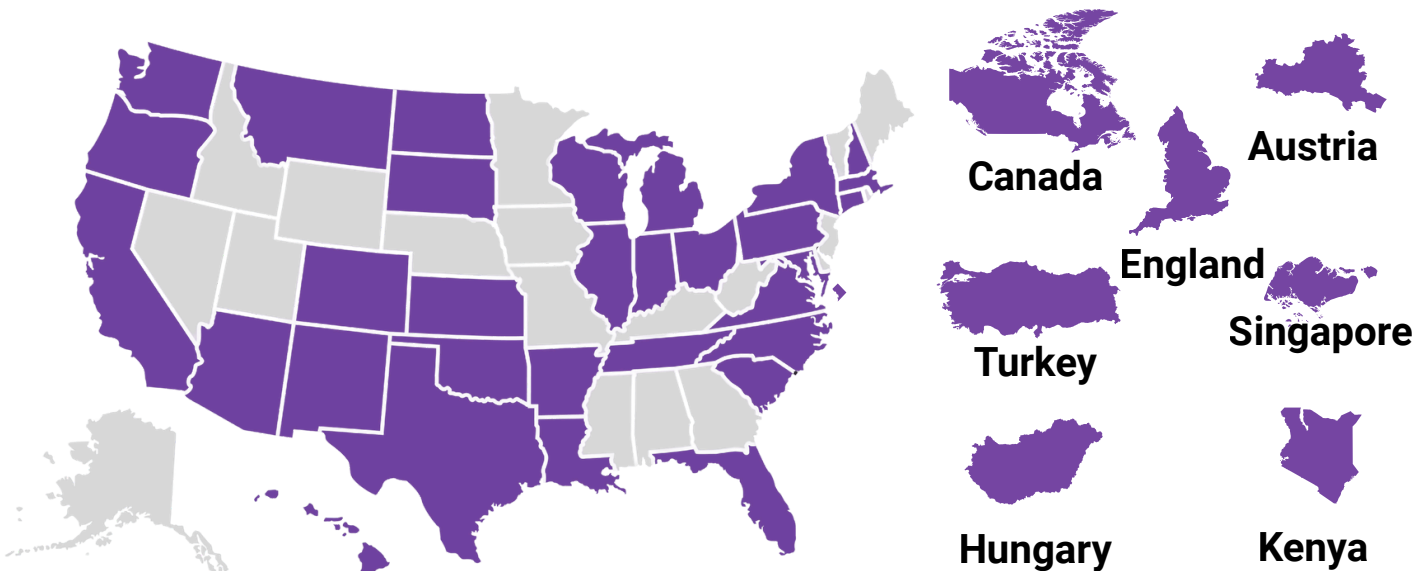


Dr. Bertha K. Madras, Harvard Medical School, McLean Hospital, addresses the crowd



Ben Cort, President/Managing Partner, NRT Behavioral Health, SAM Board Member speaks about SAM's work

SAM staff spoke in over 40 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. plus 7 countries: Canada, Austria, Turkey, Singapore, Hungary, Kenya, and England





Luke Niforatos,
SAM EVP speaks
at the Montana
State Capitol



Dr. Kevin A. Sabet
delivers the opening
keynote at the 2025
Oxford House World
Convention in
National Harbor, MD



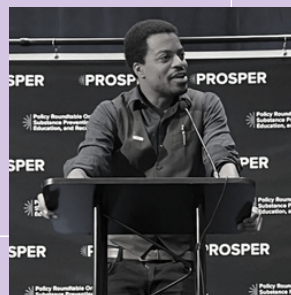
**Crissy
Groenewegen,**
Director of the
Parent Action
Network, presenting
in Orlando, FL



Jordan Davidson,
Director of
Government
Affairs, speaks on
Capitol Hill



Iman Lohrasbi,
Federal and State
Policy Associate,
presents at the
2025 Essential
Summit in
Columbus, OH



Will Jones,
Director of
Community
Engagement and
Outreach, speaks
in Vancouver, BC

Our Media Influence

In 2025, SAM's work was amplified in in major national-market media like *The Wall Street Journal*, POLITICO, CNN, The Free Press, Bloomberg, UnHerd, C-SPAN, Axios, *The Washington Post*, the *Associated Press*, Forbes, and more—as well as state and regional market publications central to SAM's strategic policy goals.



EFFORT TO REPEAL MA RECREATIONAL WEED LEGALIZATION

AMERICA'S NEWSROOM



SAM CEO Kevin Sabet joins America's Newsroom to discuss the efforts to repeal legalization in Massachusetts

8,100+

SAM appeared in topline, top-brand outlets like: *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Fox News*, *CSPAN*, *Politico*, *National Review*, *Bloomberg*, *Newsweek*, *NY1*, *NewsNation*, *The New York Post*, *City Journal*, *the Washington Free Beacon*, *the Houston Chronicle*, *the Louisville Courier-Journal*, and more. and more.

\$8.45M

 In Earned Media

381 million

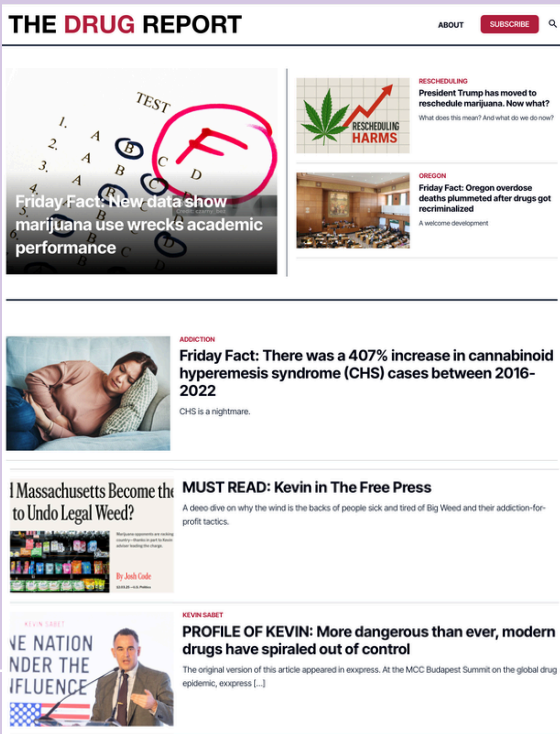
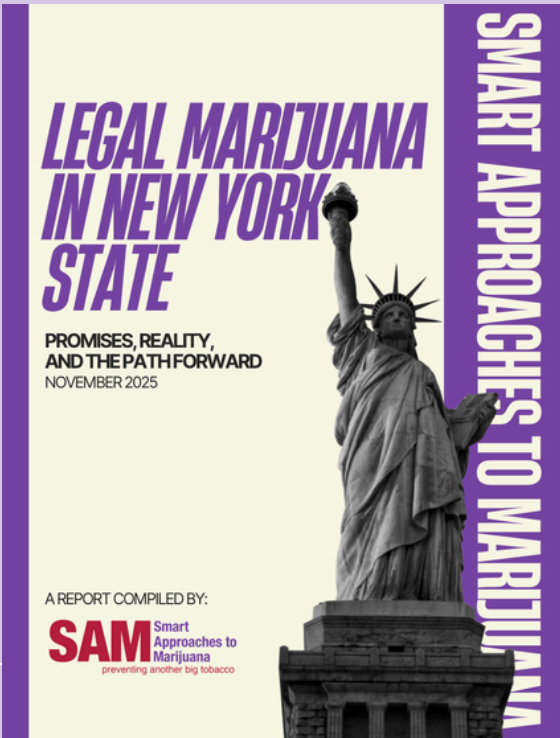
 Total Media Reach (in views)

2025 saw major communications changes and successes for Smart Approaches to Marijuana, including the appointment of veteran journalist Sam Munson to the role of comms director. SAM CEO Kevin Sabet and Executive Vice President Luke Niforatos received major, favorable coverage in high-value publications ranging from *The Free Press* to *Fox News* to *Bloomberg* to *The Washington Post*, as well as significant op-ed placements in national and regional markets.

The SAM comms team also generated significant media interest both in the revamped *Drug Report*, our owned-content channel, as well as in our *New York Impact Report* and ad campaign "What Is Marijuana?". Key strategic priorities for the coming year, notably ballot initiatives in Massachusetts and Maine to end retail sales of marijuana, appeared favorably in national-market media.

Resources Developed

In 2025, SAM relaunched its respected content brand The Drug Report with a sleek, updated website aimed at educating the public and dispelling industry misinformation. TDR generated significant interest from its re-inception including from major media brands like Politico. We also launched a new line of content, SAM Deep Dives—immersive, media-rich explainers on key aspects of marijuana, its risks, and the law, policy, and science around it—and published our New York Impact Report, an exhaustive, data-based paper documenting the ways in which the Empire State’s legal-recreational regime is harming public health.



Marijuana and Mental Health

You've heard it before: marijuana isn't bad for you. But not just not bad for you, it's actually good for you. Especially for your mental health. The people who spread this misinformation had to get it from somewhere themselves. A chain or web of misinformation on marijuana, especially the relationship between marijuana and mental health keeps expanding.

There are plenty of resources available to show that the premise that marijuana doesn't affect your mental health despite perhaps to 'zen' you out is dangerous nonsense. This deep dive guides the reader through the many resources available that show the notion that marijuana doesn't negatively impact your mental health just isn't true. It does negatively impact your mental health; knowing that is extremely important. As you will see, it can even be lifesaving.

The Basics

Marijuana addiction (cannabis use disorder or CUD)

Marijuana is addictive. There's no debate.

- Cannabis use is incredibly prevalent. 23% of U.S. adults used marijuana in the past year.
- Marijuana is very addictive. 30% of marijuana users have cannabis use disorder (the medical term for marijuana addiction).
- The younger you start to use marijuana, the more prone to cannabis use disorder you are. According to Cleveland Clinic, starting to use before the age of 18 makes one **four to seven times** more likely to develop cannabis use disorder.

If young users are more prone to marijuana use disorder, they are also **more prone** to the effects that come with it, especially cannabis-induced psychosis or addiction to marijuana.

Cannabis-induced psychosis (CIP)

CIP is psychotic behavior caused by marijuana use.

- Marijuana use makes it more likely to experience psychosis: **four times** more likely.
- Often the most destructive psychotic episode is the first one. High daily marijuana use is **strongly linked** to the onset of that first episode of psychosis.
- Even after the first episode of cannabis-induced psychosis, continued marijuana use **increases** their chances of relapsing or getting hospitalized again.

Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders

Aside from and related to experiencing CIP are the psychotic disorders that can develop from marijuana use, the most prevalent being schizophrenia.

- The U.S. National Academies' major evidence review concluded there is "**substantial evidence**" of an association between cannabis use and the development of schizophrenia or other psychoses, with highest risk among the most frequent users.

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