



EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

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ESSAA Statement on the Proposal to Legalize Marijuana in New York State

Like many other educational organizations in New York, the Empire State School Administrators Association (ESSAA) is firmly committed to the health, wellbeing, and safety of our citizens and youth.

In this regard, we oppose any legislation in New York State that would legalize the retail sale of recreational marijuana.

Since Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and the District of Columbia (Washington, DC) legalized the retail sale of marijuana, past-month use of the drug has continued to rise above the national average among youth aged 12–17 in all five jurisdictions (National Survey on Drug Use and Health [NSDUH], 2006-2017).

Medical marijuana is generally carefully controlled for levels of delta-9tetrahydrocannabinol, generally referred to as "THC". Recreational marijuana, on the other hand, is often designed to have as much THC as possible. THC is known to impair physical function in the user including reaction time while operating a vehicle and the user's ability to perceive danger and there is currently no agreed upon standard to assess impairment. Also, there are concerns of direct associations between the frequency of marijuana use and higher THC potency with the development of mental health issues (psychosis, depression, anxiety, suicidality, reshaping of brain matter, and addiction). As school leaders, we believe that these health issues will have a major negative impact on the learning environment.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, in his most recent budget address, stated that the legalization of the retail sale of recreational marijuana will generate approximately \$300 million in additional tax revenue annually to New York State, however, this revenue does not take into consideration the social costs of widespread marijuana use. Potential examples include increased emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and treatment for addiction; loss of productivity in the workplace; lower educational achievement; increased unemployment rates; increased accidental injuries; and

higher crime rates. We will not be seduced by talk of tax revenues when the underlying policy is simply bad for children.

Evidence-based research has determined that marijuana use is detrimental to the developing brain up until at least age 25. These negative impacts include memory, learning, motor control, addiction, and other health risks.

We feel that New York State would be ill-advised to move forward with the legalization of the retail sale of recreational marijuana at this time, and we oppose ANY effort by the New York Legislature to legalize the retail sale of marijuana for Recreational Use. We urge New York State to conduct a more rigorous study of the potential impacts of legalized marijuana.

Although we strongly oppose legislation to legalize marijuana for recreational, if such legislation is considered, we encourage New York to learn from other states who have legalized marijuana and build in safeguards to any proposed legislation. Of particular concern is the production and marketing of marijuana concentrates, which often has THC levels above 90 percent, which are sold in waxes, oils, and edible products in the form of cookies, brownies, candy, gummy bears, and lollipops that are indistinguishable from products that do not contain THC. There is already a major problem with students vaping THC in our schools, the detection of which is extremely difficult. If these products become legal, and thus more readily available, that problem will be greatly exacerbated.

In addition, should the retail sale of recreational marijuana be legalized in New York State, we ask that individual municipalities have the recourse to opt out of retail sales; and ask the legislature to consider the following regulatory recommendations in the event of the passage of legislation which would legalize recreational marijuana:

- Wide-ranging public awareness campaigns regarding the risks of marijuana use for all ages should be implemented in schools, communities and healthcare settings funded by the state.
- Designate State funds for existing substance abuse prevention and education initiatives.
- Issue clear regulatory prohibitions regarding marketing and advertising to youth.
- Require that marijuana products be sold only in child-proof packaging and have accompanying information/warning included in the packaging regarding risks of overdose and poisoning.
- Prohibit the retail sale and commercialism of edibles, beverages, lollipops and other products that can be marketed toward children.
- Prohibit the sale of marijuana products in establishments where alcohol is served or sold.
- Limit marijuana and marijuana products to state-operated outlets.
- Ongoing observational, process and outcome measurement data should be rigorously collected and analyzed in partnership with local, county and state health care agencies regarding the impact of marijuana use on the health of the public.