

Policy Position Paper

Should marijuana be legalized nationally?

Dainty Broughton

Master in Social Work, Alliance University

SWK 355/555: Social Welfare Policy & Services

Dr. Marcia Herrera, LMSW

February 15, 2023

I have mixed feelings when it comes to the legalization of marijuana in general. There are approximately 23 states that currently have legalized marijuana. On a state level, more and more states have legalized marijuana. States such as Colorado, Washington D.C. California, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Arizona, Missouri, Virginia and many more. While marijuana is legalized on most state level, on a federal level marijuana is illegal.

A growing number of Americans believe that recreational marijuana should be legal. A poll that was done by CBS News/YouGov that was released in April 2022, states that two-thirds of Americans want recreational marijuana use to be legalized under the federal law and in their own state. (cbsnews.com) Also, a Pew Research Center survey found similar levels of support for marijuana legalization. (Hanson, Alas, Davis Jr., January 2023)

More and more individuals are turning to marijuana for recreation use as well as medical use. More and more individuals are switching from their psychotropic medication to marijuana stating that marijuana makes them feel better than their psychotropic medication. Individuals are using marijuana for pain management and more cancer patients are using marijuana in place of their cancer medication.

A person can smoke marijuana and it also comes in the edible form. The edible form can be cookies, brownies or chips.

According to the 2020 Election in New Jersey, 67% of voters voted yes on the ballot for marijuana to be legalized. (Hanson, Alas, Davis Jr., January 2023) In California the excise tax rate on marijuana sales as of July 1, 2022, to present is 15%. The cultivation tax for cannabis flower is \$10.08 per dry weight ounce, \$3.00 per dry weight ounce and fresh cannabis plants \$1.41 per ounce between January 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022. (Hanson, Alas, Davis Jr., January 2023) According to the U.S. News, on February 22, 2021 Governor Phil Murphy signed a

legislation formally establishing the state's recreational market place while reducing penalties for underage possession of marijuana and alcohol.

In Massachusetts a person over the age of 21 years old can have up to 10 ounces of marijuana in their home. Also, adults over the age of 21 can cultivate up to six plants and up to 12 plants in a household of two or more individuals. (Hanson, Alas, Davis Jr., January 2023)

In Massachusetts an adult 21 years of age can have up to an ounce of marijuana on their person and up to 10 ounces in their home. In Massachusetts an adult can cultivate as well. A resident can group up to six plants per person and up to 12 plants in a household of two or more people. (Hanson, Alas, Davis Jr., January 2023)

According to Why Marijuana Should be Legal, And Expensive? that was written by Khazan, it states, "In large amounts, alcohol is more dangerous than marijuana and the cost of alcohol abuse to society is by some estimates, greater than the cost of all illegal drug abuse combined. Many public health experts speculate that if marijuana becomes a substitute for alcohol, this shift may have a positive overall influence on the health of American adults. But many of these same experts worry that the blaze of decriminalization will harm young people, who suffer disproportionately from pot's ill effects". Khazan also stated that marijuana has become the new mainstream.

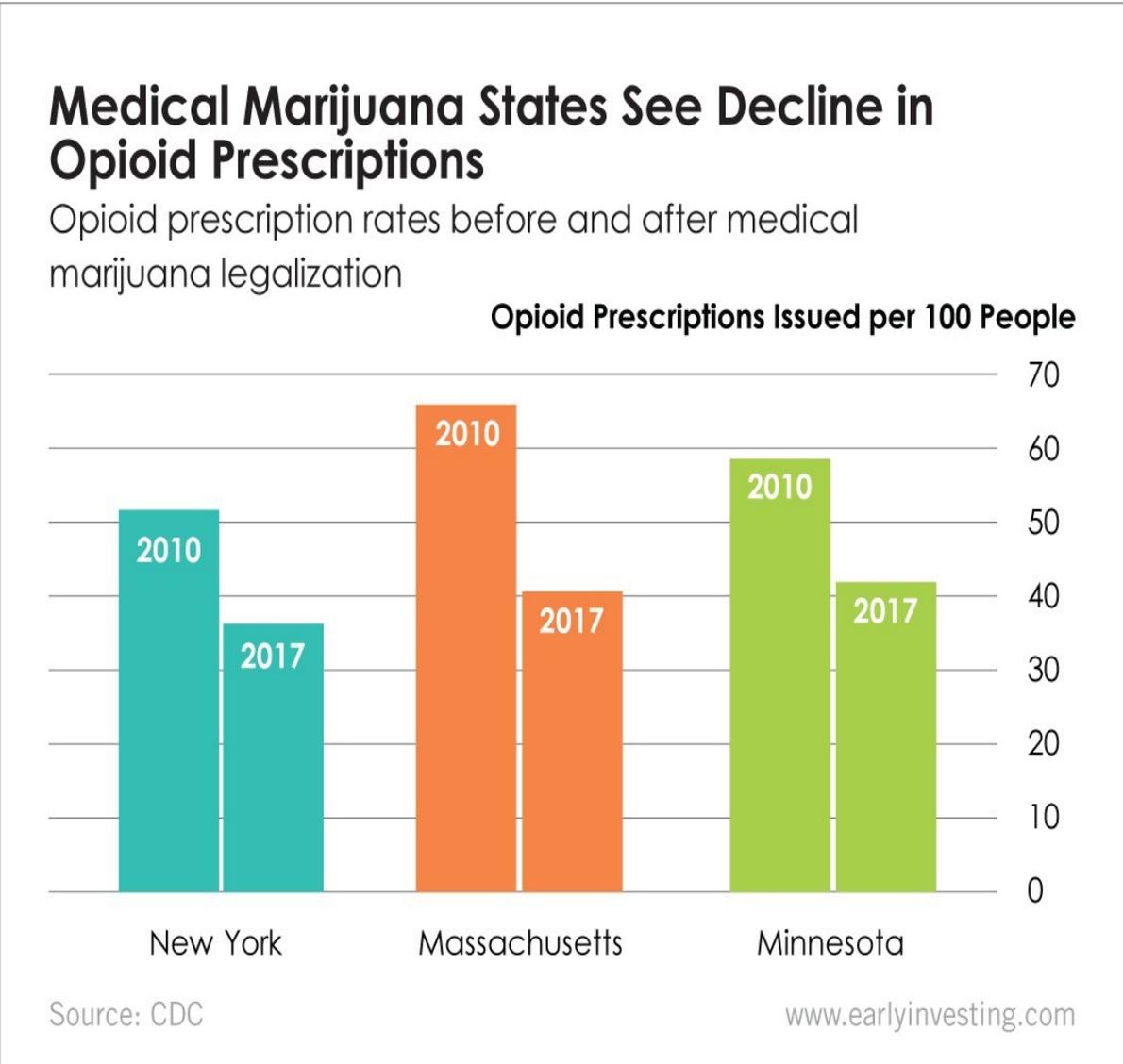
According to the New York city Comptroller report in 2018, it estimates the legal adult-use marijuana market to some of \$3.1 billion per year in New York State and about \$1.1 billion of that in New York City. The report went on to say that the marijuana market could conservatively yield annual tax revenues of as much as \$1.3 billion total at the State and City Levels. (comptroller.nyc.gov) This is to show you by legalizing marijuana on the national level, the federal government can make a profit to help the economy.

Below is a chart I obtained from the CDC that shows the opioid prescription rate per 100 people in New York, Massachusetts and Minnesota in 2010 (pre-medical cannabis legalization)

and 2017 (post-legalization). You can see that since marijuana has become legalize, the opioid prescription rate dropped. On the left is 2010 and on the right is 2017.

“Massachusetts legalized medical marijuana in 2013. From 2010 to 2017, its opioid prescription rate dropped 41%. Minnesota, which legalized medical marijuana in 2014, saw a 31% drop. New York also legalized medical marijuana in 2014. Its opioid prescription rate fell 25%. New York’s 2017 opioid prescription rate was the lowest in the country.

New York has been building on this progress. In 2018, New York lawmakers authorized the use of medical marijuana to treat opioid addiction.” (Earlyinvestment.com) This shows that by legalizing marijuana, it helps solve the opioid issues as more and more people are leaning to marijuana.



On the other hand, I also believe marijuana should not be legalized nationally. There are too many unknown about the effect on marijuana mentally and physically. According to medical professionals, research into the benefits and risk of marijuana use has been limited, leaving most doctors with more questions than answers. Dr. Jan K. Carney of the Larner College of Medicine states she would not recommend marijuana to patients as of yet. Dr. Carney stated “Evidence is growing but still inadequate, and marijuana use is associated with risk for harm to pregnant women, adolescents and young adults”. (Finnegan, January 8, 2019) Dr. Carney states that the federal government still classifies marijuana as Schedule I drug which is the same category as

heroin and LSD drugs. These drugs according to Dr. Carney are not currently medical accepted use. Dr. Eli Y. Adashi, M.D., of Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University in Rhode Island states marijuana is the most commonly used illicit substance during pregnancy and has gone mainstream. Dr. Adashi states that doctors should consider marijuana use harmful to pregnant and breastfeeding patients until there is evidence that proves it is safe. Dr. Adashi went on to say without data and approval for marijuana from the Food and Drug Administration, physicians should discourage its use by pregnant and lactating patients. (Finnegan, January 8, 2019)

According to Marijuana-Related Car Accidents by Frank Gallucci, it shows that researchers compared information about fatal accidents in Washington State before and after recreational marijuana was legalized in the state. Research shows that prior to the legalization of marijuana in the state, about 8.8% of drivers involved in fatal traffic crashes tested positive for THC. Over the 12 to 24 months following the legalization of marijuana the percentage more than double to 18%. By 2017 5 years after the legalization of marijuana, 21.7% of drivers involved in fatal accidents were positive for THC. (Gallucci, December 22, 2022)

There has been an increase of children to the ER due to ingesting edible marijuana. For example in Colorado, doctors have seen an increase in hospitalization of children from exposure to marijuana often by ingesting cannabis product such as candy or baked goods. In Colorado the ED doctor reported seen a dramatic increase in ED visits for cannabinoid hyperemesis which is a condition that leads to repeated and several bouts of vomiting. (Finnegan, January 8, 2019)

I personally have seen the edible marijuana chips, cookies and brownies. Children can easily mistake any of these items as regular chips or brownies. I had a client which was about one year old who took a baby of Doritos out of the bio-mother's bag and eat the baby. Needless to say, he was sleepy and lethargic and had to go to the emergency room. The bio-mother had a

licensed medical marijuana card. Even though the bio-mother have a licensed medical marijuana card, she failed to adequately put her marijuana away and left it easily accessible to her son.

This is a true story. I had a client who smoked marijuana like it was nothing. Their small infant was choking. Due to my client being so high, they thought they were helping the baby from choking; however, they were not, and the baby died. Needless to say, my clients were moving in such a slow motion, they had no idea what they were doing.

What people need to know is that marijuana is a downer. A lot of people informed me they use marijuana because it calms them down. When caring for a newborn, operating a vehicle and working in a job where one must be focus, smoking or eating edible marijuana is a no. There are too many unknowns about marijuana. Studies/research needs to be done on children who are born positive to marijuana as well as been expose to marijuana.

Yes, there is money to be make by selling marijuana but at what cost we are willing to risk the life of people and innocent children.

Reference

California Department of Tax and Fee Administration – cdtfa.ca.gov

Hanson, Clair, Alas, Horus, Davis Jr. Elliot. January 20, 2023. Where is Marijuana Legal? U.S. News. [Usnews.com](https://www.usnews.com)

Khazan, Olga, Why Marijuana Should be Legal, And Expensive

Finnegan, Joanne. January 8, 2019. Marijuana legalization leaves doctors wondering “What do we tell our patients?” [Fiercehealthcare.com](https://www.fiercehealthcare.com)

Gallucci, F. December 22, 2022. Marijuana-Related Car Accidents. [Plevinandgallucci.com](https://www.plevinandgallucci.com)
[CBSnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com)

[Comptroller.nyc.gov](https://www.comptroller.nyc.gov)

[Earlyinvestment.com](https://www.earlyinvestment.com)

[CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)