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**Bipartisan Committee Pushes Back Against Marijuana Industry in Defense of MA Kids**

A New Campaign To Oppose Legalization of Commercial Marijuana Will Highlight Proven Health Risks To Minors and Dangers Of Allowing The Marijuana Industry Into Massachusetts

**BOSTON** - Raising concerns about the health risks to young people and of allowing the billion-dollar marijuana industry into Massachusetts, a bi-partisan committee has been formed to oppose the ballot question that would legalize commercial marijuana in Massachusetts. Marijuana legalization in Colorado and elsewhere has significantly increased access to this drug for young people, resulting in more marijuana shops in Colorado than McDonalds and Starbucks combined.

Papers will be filed with the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) to form “A Campaign For A Safe and Healthy Massachusetts.” The Committee will bring together a vast coalition of health care and community leaders, anti-addiction advocates, educators/teachers, business groups, first responders, and families who are opposing this proposed new law.

The Committee will highlight the numerous negative impacts that have resulted from the commercial legalization of the marijuana industry, particularly the evidence of harm to young people. Marijuana has proven to be an addictive drug with long-term negative consequences for kids – including impacting brain development, academic success, and long-term career growth. Since becoming the first state to legalize, Colorado has become the #1 state in the nation in teen marijuana use, with teen use jumping 20% in the two years since legalization. Edible marijuana products account for nearly 50% of the industry's sales in Colorado. Marijuana infused products such as gummy bears, candy bars and “cannabis cola” are often indistinguishable from traditional products and attractive to children, placing them at significant risk of accidental use

"I'm happy to join Mayor Walsh, Speaker DeLeo, Senator Lewis and others in bipartisan opposition to legalizing a recreational marketplace for a drug that would put our children at risk and threaten to reverse our progress combating the growing opioid epidemic so this industry can rake in millions in profits," Governor Charlie Baker said. "We will join healthcare professionals, law enforcement, educators and family advocates to educate the public about the risks associated with this dangerous proposal and the serious adverse consequences facing states who have adopted similar laws."

"I've met far too many families in Boston and elsewhere where kids have lost their way in school and been shut out of success in the workplace due to addiction and abuse of marijuana," Mayor Martin J. Walsh said. "Where marijuana is legal, young people are more likely to use it and a vote against legalizing the commercial marijuana industry is a vote to protect our kids and communities."

"As we face a substance addiction crisis of epic proportions, I oppose measures that make it easier to introduce young people to drug use," Speaker Robert DeLeo said. "I stand with public officials, such as Governor Baker and Mayor Walsh, and others who want to make sure the public knows the real risks involved with this

dangerous proposal.”

“The marijuana industry is seeking government protection to engineer, mass-produce, and aggressively market their highly addictive, high potency THC products in every community,” Heidi Heilman, President of the Massachusetts Prevention Alliance said. “This would be counterproductive to everything we are working for to protect our children and families from drug use and addiction. Given our current addiction epidemic, we need to be preventing drug use - we don't need more marijuana in our neighborhoods, schools and communities.”

Marijuana is now far more potent than it was a generation ago. Studies have put marijuana potencies at around 20% THC, and getting as high as nearly 30%, compared to the 1980s when the potency was about 4% THC.

Massachusetts has already taken major steps to address concerns around this issue. Massachusetts has decriminalized the possession of marijuana - people are not being jailed for marijuana use nor are they receiving a criminal record for such activity. Massachusetts also legalized the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

This proposed law is written by and for the corporate interests that have profited from legalization across the country. The petition has specific language that limits communities' ability to restrict the locations and growth of pot shops. In Colorado, where recreational marijuana distribution is more stringently regulated than the proposed Massachusetts law, legalization has resulted in more marijuana retailers in local communities (700) than McDonalds and Starbucks combined (573).

Among the groups that have already come out in opposition to this initiative include: the Massachusetts Hospital Association, the Massachusetts Medical Society, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, and all Massachusetts District Attorneys.

The Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts has launched a website at [www.safeandhealthyma.com](http://www.safeandhealthyma.com) and twitter account at [@safehealthyma](https://twitter.com/safehealthyma).

The bi-partisan members of the campaign's steering committee include: Cape and Islands District Attorney Michael O'Keefe, Senator Jason Lewis, Senator Vinny DeMacedo, Representative Paul Donato, Representative Hannah Kane, Heidi Heilman (President of the Massachusetts Prevention Alliance), former Senator Steven Baddour, Jim Conroy (former Senior Advisor to Governor Baker), Corey Welford (former Chief of Staff to Attorney General Maura Healey) and David Stone (political advisor to Mayor Walsh). The Treasurer and Chairman of the Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts is David Martin.

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