



Broad-based Bi-partisan Coalition Urges Rejection of Ballot Question to Legalize Commercial Marijuana Industry in Massachusetts

As Commonwealth Confronts Addiction Crisis, Coalition Leaders Believe Allowing Billion-Dollar Industry to Market Edible Products, increase Access to Young People Is Wrong Path for Massachusetts
July 8, 2016

BOSTON – A broad-based, bi-partisan coalition of community leaders and experts joined together today to urge voters to reject the proposed ballot question to legalize the commercial marijuana industry in Massachusetts. Particularly in the context of the addiction crisis we are currently facing, the leaders said allowing the billion-dollar marijuana industry into Massachusetts to market highly potent edible products and increase access to young people is the wrong path for the state.

The press conference, held today at the William J. Ostiguy Recovery High School in Boston, was the official kick off of the Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts. Participating in the event included Governor Charlie Baker, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, Suffolk County Sheriff Steve Tompkins, health and anti-addiction advocates, doctors and educators, and business and public safety leaders.

"This ballot measure would create a billion dollar, for-profit marijuana industry and introduce highly potent marijuana edible products in the form of candies, sweets and sodas to our main-street shops," Governor Baker said. "As our work to bend the trend on the opioid epidemic is just beginning, the last thing we need is to add yet another challenge for our young people and our addiction community. I'm honored to be part of a broad-based and bipartisan coalition that will make sure voters understand the honest and practical implications of this proposal."

"This question is a reminder of calls from parents who are terrified of what is happening to their teenage child who is using marijuana," Mayor Walsh said. "It's a reminder of bright, happy kids taken down by pot in their teenage years, and a reminder of families crushed by sadness when it happens. The data tells a clear story of the dangers behind commercial marijuana, but it's the suffering behind the data that really matters. This question only raises that risk, and I'm not going to stand by and watch it happen."

"I'm so proud we took strong action in combatting opioid addiction with our substance addiction legislation this year. I wouldn't want to do anything to jeopardize that progress," House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo said. "At a time when we are dealing with an addiction crisis, it is reckless and unwise to increase access to another drug that we know is harmful to our kids and families."

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 health purposes.

This proposed law is written by and for the Marijuana Industry. Among the concerns raised about the ballot question included:

- It specifically authorizes the promotion and sale of highly potent marijuana edible products like candy, gummy bears, soda and other products that appeal to children. Edibles like this account for 50% of the sales in Colorado, and the Massachusetts ballot question places no potency limit on the products.
- Since becoming the first state to legalize, Colorado has become the number one state in the nation for teen marijuana use.
- The ballot measure sets no limit on the number of marijuana producers and sellers, leading to more pot shops being opened in CO than Starbucks and McDonalds combined.
- It allows people to home-grow tens of thousands of dollars worth of marijuana in their households, even over objections by neighbors, which criminals are exploiting to create an entirely new black market in Colorado.
- The measure is written by and for the marijuana industry, severely limiting the ability of cities and towns to set their own rules about the issue and giving preferential treatment to existing medical marijuana.
- The ballot measure would increase drugged driving fatalities, with the number of traffic deaths due to marijuana impaired driving doubling in Washington state since legalization.

This week, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court allowed the proposed ballot question to go forward and proponents submitted the signatures required to get the ballot question before voters.

Among the groups that have already come out in opposition to this ballot question include:

- Massachusetts Hospital Association
- Massachusetts Medical Society
- Massachusetts Municipal Association
- Associated Industries of Massachusetts
- Retailers Association of Massachusetts
- Association of School Superintendents
- Construction Industries of Massachusetts
- Action for Boston Community Development
- Association for Behavioral Healthcare
- National Association of Mental Illness (Massachusetts Chapter)
- Massachusetts Chiefs of Police, Massachusetts Sheriffs Association and all Massachusetts District Attorneys

The bi-partisan members of the campaign's steering committee include: Senator Jason Lewis (D), Senator Vincent DeMacedo (R), Cape and Islands District Attorney Michael O'Keefe (R), Representative Paul Donato (D), Representative Hannah Kane (R), 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).

For more information on the Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts, visit safeandhealthyma.com or on twitter at [@safehealthyma](https://twitter.com/safehealthyma).