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**STATEMENT REGARDING OPPOSITION TO MARIJUANA
LEGALIZATION IN VERMONT**

January 12, 2016

The Chittenden County Law Enforcement Executives (CCLEE) is an informal group that meets monthly to discuss issues of common concern. The group represents local, county, state and federal law enforcement partners from Chittenden County.

Disclaimer: The following document was created by the group but does not necessarily represent the opinions of every organization or municipality/department in the group. Some Chiefs/Executives may hold positions that are different than the elected official(s) in their community. Chittenden County State Attorney TJ Donovan, a member of CCLEE, did not participate in the creation of this document.

CCLEE recognizes that Vermont is at a crossroads regarding the potential legalization of marijuana use, cultivation, etc. We feel strongly that this is an issue that will negatively impact citizens and have ripple effects across a broad spectrum of vocations – medicine, education, transportation, regulatory agencies, and policing to name a few. CCLEE has compiled a preliminary list of reasons why its members do not support marijuana legalization. These reasons generally fall into one of three categories: health, law enforcement/public safety hazards, and unintended consequences.

Please see attached document.

CCLEE OPPOSITION TO MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

HEALTH:

- Neuro-science research demonstrates the following impacts:
 - Eroded judgement, short term memory loss, diminished motor coordination, reaction time and complex task performance AKA op motor vehicle
 - Impaired brain development including deficits in IQ and processing speed, verbal memory and executive function of the brain

- **Professor Wayne Hall a leading expert in addiction at King's College, London, conducted a 20 year study of effects of marijuana use.**
 - One in six teenagers who regularly smoke the drug becomes dependent on it.

 - Cannabis doubles the risk of developing psychotic disorders including schizophrenia.

 - Cannabis users do worse at school. Heavy use in adolescence appears to impair intellectual development.

 - One in ten adults who regularly smoke the drug become dependent on it and those who use it are more likely to go on to use harder drugs.

 - Driving after smoking cannabis doubles the risk of a car crash. A risk which increases substantially if the driver has also had a drink.

 - Smoking marijuana while pregnant reduces the baby's birth weight.

- Stats from Colorado detail a significant increase in ER visits (adults and children). It is quite apparent that although a law legalized use and possession will likely target those 21 and older, use among youth will naturally increase.

- The 2015 CDPHE (Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment) report found evidence of "associations between adolescent and young adult marijuana use and at least short-term impairment of cognitive and academic abilities," and evidence indicating that "adolescent marijuana users were less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be addicted to marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco in adulthood."

- Marijuana smoke contains 50-70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than does tobacco smoke.

- Based on the growing health care crisis and the emphasis on educating everyone on the effects of smoking cigarettes, it is hypocritical for the state to entertain supporting smoking marijuana when we are doing everything we can to get people to quit smoking tobacco. As a society, we will then have to start financing the use/addiction support for marijuana users as the number of users and amount used will likely grow if legalized.

- **Stressing the health care system - Nora Volkow, the head of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), asserted, "Legal drugs are the main problem that we have in our country as it relates to morbidity and mortality. By far. Many more people**

die of tobacco than all of the drugs together. Many more people die of alcohol than all of the illicit drugs together. Can we as a country afford to have a third legal drug?"

LAW ENFORCEMENT/PUBLIC SAFETY CHALLENGES:

- **Butane Honey Oil aka Hash Oil (BHO) Production** – One of the most alarming trends police and fire officials across Colorado have been contending with a sharp rise in home explosions and burn trauma, as people use flammable butane to make hashish oil. BHO is an extremely dangerous product made using pot. It is highly desirable because it is cheap and anyone can produce it in their home. The process is eerily similar to meth in production. This is a by-product of readily accessible marijuana and has already been seen in VT. There was a recent presentation done by a group of LPO students addressing this issue. Slide show could be used as a resource for this point. **BHO has already been identified in Vermont.**
- **Highway Safety:** Marijuana consumption impairs the driving abilities of both private and commercial drivers. A complicating factor is that there is no known device for testing a driver's THC impairment (like an alco-sensor for alcohol impairment). Because THC remains in the bloodstream for 28 days after a marijuana high, and associated driving impairment, is over, a simple test of blood-THC content is insufficient.
- **A predictable rise in DUI (Drugs)** - Marijuana affects many skills required for safe driving: alertness, the ability to concentrate, coordination, and reaction time. These effects can last up to 24 hours after smoking marijuana. Marijuana use can make it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and signs on the road. The State does not have anywhere near the number of DREs, or a testing mechanism, to deal with such an inevitable increase. There is no roadside test available to determine THC level.
- **Black Market:** Colorado's legalization of cannabis did not eliminate the illegal market. Some officials expressed concern that the comparative high-cost of legal, regulated and taxed recreational marijuana failed to deter user exploitation of the loose medical marijuana regime, and the black market in illegal, cheaper, marijuana.
- **Legalization would do little, if anything, to curb drug violence:** Marijuana accounts for only a portion of the proceeds gained by criminal organizations that profit from drug distribution, human trafficking, and other crimes, so legalizing marijuana would not deter these groups from continuing to operate. With higher taxes on marijuana – violent drug cartels would simply undercut legal prices to keep their market share. With increased demand for marijuana resulting from legalization, these groups would likely grow stronger.
- **Diversion of resources:** Law enforcement agencies will undoubtedly divert resources from certain operations to chasing marijuana enforcement issues. So, any thought that legalizing will reduce, or somehow minimize, the "war on drugs" is without merit.
- **Diversion of Marijuana:** In 2014 two neighboring states, Oklahoma and Nebraska, filed federal lawsuits against Colorado for legalizing marijuana. "Marijuana flows ... into neighboring states," it is alleged, undermining their marijuana bans, "draining their treasuries, and placing stress on their criminal justice systems."

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES:

- **Taxing Marijuana Sales:** The costs to society of marijuana use will be higher than the revenue it generates. Revenue goals in other states have not been met. See Colorado's Governor on CNN who stated that to date there has been no increase in revenue from marijuana. This is in contradistinction to the projected \$98 million of revenue for the State in 2014.
- **Creating an environment of permissiveness:** The message sent to children that drug use is acceptable. Please see Boston Globe editorial from 6/18/15 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/06/17/just-say-marijuana-legalization/4O4QSmiktA4a7yvUO70fVJ/story.html>
- **Lack of regulations and testing for content/purity:** Colorado is finding high levels of banned pesticides in the commercially available marijuana. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/25/us/colorado-marijuana-pesticides-testing/index.html>
- **Edibles - Human error/nature/poor parenting:** **Many of Colorado's starkest problems with legal marijuana stem from pot-infused cookies, chocolates and other surprisingly potent edible treats that are especially popular with tourists and casual marijuana users.** So far this year, nine children have ended up at Children's Hospital Colorado in Aurora after consuming marijuana, six of whom got critically sick.
- **Marijuana tourism:** States that have legalized marijuana report a high level of visitors who purchase marijuana. It is unknown how much of this goes back to non-legal states. Vermont has approximately 40 million people within a half day's drive of its borders. To presume we won't become a haven for marijuana seekers is naïve.
- **Illicit crop growers are now turning to increased poppy/opium production:** As demand for foreign product drops due to legalization, some farmers in South America are replacing marijuana crops with opioid crops. This makes opioids even cheaper and more readily available.
- **Big business pushes out mom and pop businesses:** In Colorado it is estimated that the marijuana industry now takes up 1/3 of all available storage and warehouse space. The marijuana business is pushing out all other business. It is such huge money that it is paying high rents and leases and other business can't afford to compete.
- **Growing marijuana is energy heavy** In a state that values the environment and conservation what about an industry that sucks up huge amounts of energy both to grow (heat/water/etc) and to store (air conditioner/dehumidification) is consistent with Vermont values? The impact on electricity providers and consumer rates, the management of greenhouse gases, and other byproducts of commercial marijuana production are still being played out in other states, with mixed results.
- **Why now?** CCLEE believes firmly that now is not the right time for Vermont to consider marijuana legalization. The CCLEE offers this document for your consideration and fully expects that law makers will find reliable longitudinal data necessary. Such data will likely be years in the making.

Other resources:

What You Should Know About Marijuana Concentrates (December 2014):
www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/marijuana-concentrates.pdf

Dangers and Consequences of Marijuana Abuse (May 2014): www.dea.gov/docs/dangers-consequences-marijuana-abuse.pdf

DEA Position on Marijuana (April 2013): www.dea.gov/docs/marijuana_position_2011.pdf

Marijuana Research Reports NIDA: www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/letter-director

Speaking Out Against Drug Legalization (2010): www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/speaking_out.pdf

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/06/17/just-say-marijuana-legalization/4O4QSmIKtA4a7yvUO70fVJ/story.html>

<http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2015/08/25/marijuana-industry-taking-a-lot-of-colorados.html>

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/world/americas/mexican-opium-production-rises-to-meet-heroin-demand-in-us.html>

The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact, Volume 3 issued September 2015.

http://www.denverpost.com/editorials/ci_25731260/home-hash-oil-should-be-banned-colorado

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