

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Norman Major, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 210-211
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: New Futures Opposition to Marijuana Legalization and HB 656 home cultivation of Marijuana Plants possession and certain marijuana-infused products.

Dear Representative Major and Honorable Members of the Committee:

New Futures is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates, educates and collaborates to improve the health and wellness of all New Hampshire residents through policy change. In this role, we work extensively with policy makers, stakeholders, and prevention partners to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug problems in our state. We oppose marijuana legalization and HB656 as amended.

While New Futures respects the difficult position the Ways and Means Committee finds itself in, in terms of hearing a bill that does not include taxes and fees, it's imperative that the committee understand the fiscal and revenue implications of passing legislation that did not have a thorough vetting by the appropriate policy committee. HB 656 allows for the possession, consuming, growing, and transporting of up to 6 plants (up to 6 pounds) of marijuana for personal possession. It also allows for the transfer of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce of marijuana and marijuana infused products. This is bad policy if we want to keep New Hampshire a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

This legislation will result in an increase in public health and safety costs without a revenue source to pay for the unintended consequences as we have seen in other states who have passed this legislation. Arrests for the public use of marijuana in Washington DC has nearly tripled since marijuana has become legal.¹ States that have legalized marijuana have seen an increase in drugged driving, with no way of testing for driving under the influence of marijuana.²

Another point of consideration for you as policy makers to understand is how passing this law impact current revenue sources? Will legalizing marijuana impact tourism and the state brand? What will it mean for businesses in New Hampshire? Studies have shown increase marijuana use

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/its-summer-and-washington-smells-like-weed-everywhere-all-the-time/2017/07/03/10d3461a-578a-11e7-b38e-35fd8e0c288f_story.html?utm_term=.06859ff6019a

² <https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/substance-impaired-driving/drugged-driving/#.WoLOS66nHcs>

leads to lower productivity in the workplace, higher absenteeism rates, and greater risk of workplace accidents.³

These are all questions that should be answered by policy makers before rushing into a relatively new public health experiment. These are also the exact questions a study commission, approved by this committee and the legislature last year, are looking at right now.

What do know for certain are the following facts;

1. The costs to New Hampshire of substance abuse have increased from \$1.84 billion to \$2.36 billion since 2014, an amount equal to over \$21,000 annually for every individual in the state who is dependent upon or abuses alcohol or drugs. The annual cost of drug and alcohol misuse in New Hampshire is equal to over three percent (3.32%) of the state's annual gross state product.⁴
2. New Hampshire has woefully underfunded substance abuse prevention, treatment and recovery, by ignoring a law on the books which requires a certain percentage of revenue from the sale of alcohol to be used for that purpose.
3. Our state continues to grapple with an unprecedented opioid epidemic.

For these reasons alone, HB 656 (whether as introduced or reflected in amendment) is the wrong bill at the wrong time. We urge the Committee to vote Inexpedient to Legislate on HB656.

Respectfully,



Kathryn (Kate) Frey
Vice President of Advocacy
New Futures

³ <https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SAM-report-on-CO-and-WA-issued-31-Oct-2016.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.new-futures.org/2017NFEconomicReport>