

To: Guilford Board of Selectmen M.T. HOEY III, L.FEDERICI, S. RUOFF, C.HAVRDA, S. RENNER

From: Youth Co-Chair of Guilford DAY, Carson Tosta , GHS TEAM President, Julia Rubbo

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Guilford DAY requests the Board of Selectmen to ban retail marijuana in Guilford. Section 148 of Connecticut's new marijuana law explicitly allows municipalities to amend their local ordinances or zoning regulations to prohibit cannabis establishments.

We are requesting the ban as a public health measure -- a message to Guilford's parents and kids that marijuana consumption is a significant health risk for kids. In considering a ban on retail marijuana in Guilford, we believe it is critical for the Board of Selectmen to consider key trends in states that have legalized the commercial sale of marijuana.

First and foremost is the troubling rise of marijuana potency.

Products such as shatter, glass, dab, and other forms of extremely high potency products are quite dangerous, although there is little public awareness in Guilford of the risks. Most people believe that what Connecticut legalized resembles "Woodstock weed" and don't understand the true implications of the new legislation. Peer reviewed scientific studies discuss possible adverse effects on memory, motivation, learning, IQ, potential causation of schizophrenia, paranoia, and birth defects in a developing baby if the mother consumes marijuana during pregnancy, intoxication that increases the risk of auto crashes, the potential for addiction to marijuana, and increased risk of developing an addiction to other substances including opiates. The risks are higher for those who begin to use at a young age, and those who consume highly potent products.

We are including a link to a presentation by Ben Cort, a leading Colorado expert in the field of treatment and recovery from addiction. Cort speaks of the recent impact in Colorado of high potency THC concentrates. In past years, the THC concentration in natural marijuana was in the range of 0.2% - 10%. Now THC concentrates in Colorado are commonly 60% or more. These are not rare exceptions but are mainstream products accounting for almost half of marijuana sales in the state.

The Cort presentation is an hour or so, but it is possible to view key sections starting at minute 19:30, and then jumping back to minute 15, and then back to minute 7. Cort describes how high potency THC concentrates cause severe cannabis use disorder, and the extreme difficulty of successful treatment. Cort states that this is a relatively new, poorly understood, issue. Cort points out that those most affected by severe cannabis treatment disorder tend to be in the lowest economic sector, including those with less education, those with the poorest jobs, and the mentally ill. This is the link to the Cort presentation: <https://youtu.be/5pDCuvdsOcm> (To play this, put your cursor very close to the first letter, and click, then click on the address on the next small screen. It takes a few seconds to start. Sorry about the complex instructions, but this is an excellent video.)

To date, the market share of such concentrated marijuana products is rapidly growing.

Section 32 of the new CT statute includes some limits on potency, but they are toothless. In the 1970's - 1990's, marijuana products contained between 0.2 - 10% THC, the psychotropic component of marijuana. Connecticut's new law explicitly allows up to 30% THC concentration for cannabis flower and plant material and up to 60% THC potency in concentrated products. And the law excludes any limits for "prefilled cartridges for use in an electronic cannabis delivery system" - i.e., vaping products. One has to wonder if the industry wrote Connecticut's Section 32 potency limits as a joke. Of course, the concentrated products are increasingly popular among youth. In Colorado, the use of marijuana dabs among youth rose five-fold since 2017, while the use of marijuana vapes doubled.

This leads to our second area of concern: states that commercialized the drug are seeing rising rates of youth use, hospitalizations, poison center calls, and other negative outcomes related to the drug.

Once again pointing to the example of Colorado, children under the age of 15 increased their use of marijuana by 15% over the past two years. California, Nevada, and Oregon also saw 20% and higher increases in youth use over the past two years. Keeping the drug away from youth is crucial.

The Youth Co-chairs of Guilford DAY and TEAM especially wish to emphasize that most Guilford teens underestimate the risks of marijuana. The commercialization of marijuana will lead to increased advertising and access to marijuana, and increased teen addiction. We all know that advertising works. People buy the stuff that's advertised. A ban on retail marijuana in Guilford will not keep kids from obtaining marijuana, but it will send a message to our parents and kids that Guilford cares about its youth, and that marijuana poses a significant threat to public health, especially for kids.

DATA On Guilford Teens and Marijuana

The bottom line is that Guilford has been making good progress in reducing teen substance use. We should continue to push the effort.

As you know, Guilford has an effective youth-led program to protect kids from substance use. In the past ten years we have progressed from a bad situation, worse than the CT state average, to approx.. a 50% reduction in Guilford use.

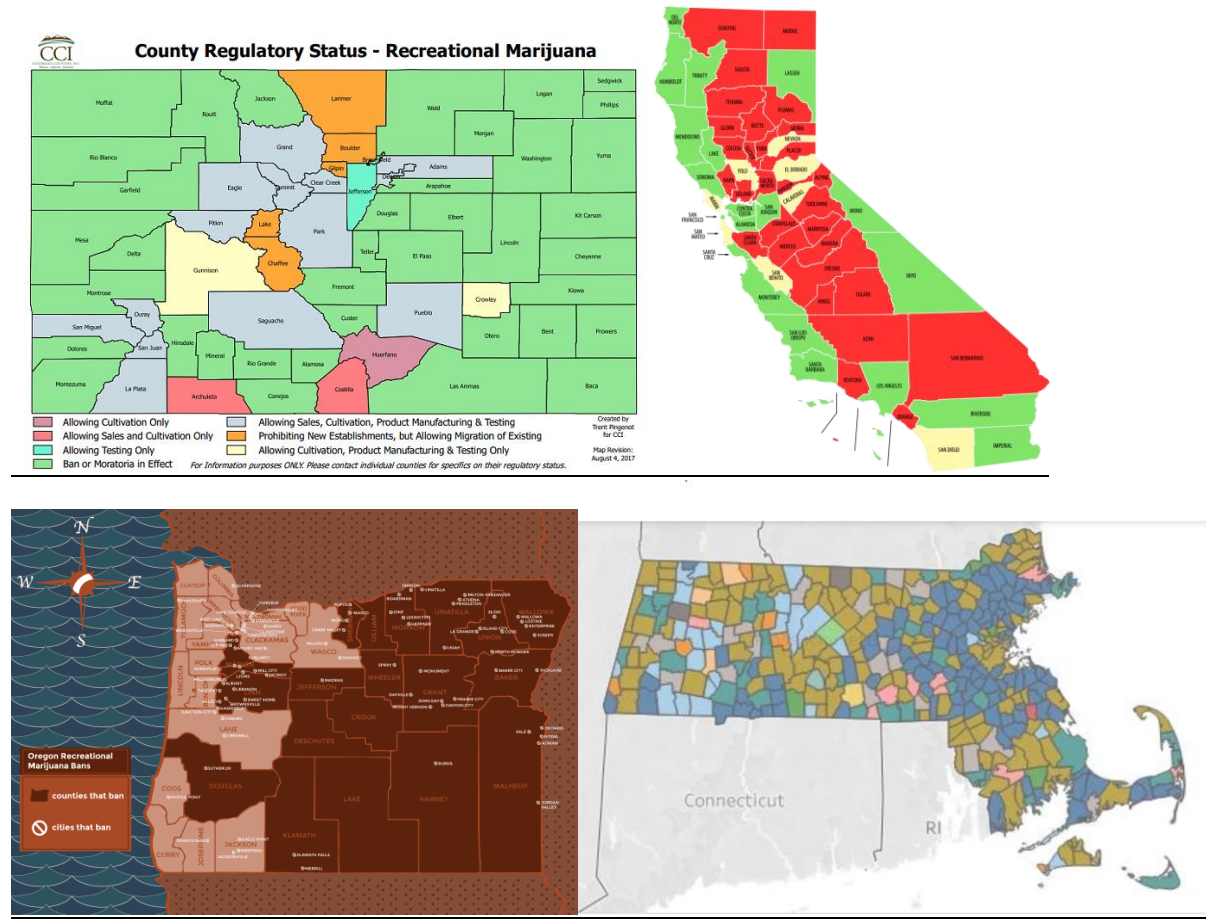
Specifically, data on marijuana use in the past 30 days -- National data 2018-2019, ages 12-17 -- 13.2%. State data 2018-2019, ages 12 - 17 -- 20.4%. The Guilford data for grades 7-12 for marijuana use in the past 30 days in 2018 was 11% and 8% in 2021.

State data for "perception of harm" of marijuana use, ages 12 -17, -- 23.6%. The data for Guilford for grades 7 - 12, in 2018 was 66%, and in 2021 was 59%.

FYI, Guilford high school seniors' perception of risk for marijuana use in 2018 was 48%, and in 2021 was 39%. Obviously, the older kids have a lower perception of risk than the younger ones, but still, the level of concern for our kids is higher than the state average.

The Concept of Banning Retail Marijuana in Guilford is Not Unusual. In Other States, Many Municipalities Have Banned Retail Marijuana Following Legalization. Other Towns in Connecticut Are Considering a Ban

In Connecticut, Greenwich and Newtown have already adopted a ban. We are aware that Ridgefield, Prospect, Bethel, and Waterbury are considering it. We don't know how many other towns are likely to implement a ban, but hopefully it will be similar to Colorado, California, and Massachusetts. In those states, following legalization, many towns banned the retail sale of marijuana. In those municipalities, although possession and use are legal as mandated by the state, commercial activity is banned.



Professor Deepak D'Souza.

Professor Deepak D'Souza of Yale, a Guilford resident, is a world class expert on marijuana. We believe you would be shocked to hear details of the science on the potential health risks marijuana poses for teens, and we request that he be able to speak to your Board, and to the general public, at a future Selectmen's meeting. We believe it is critically important that Guilford residents, especially parents and kids, learn more about the health effects of marijuana on teens.

Conclusion

We are not so naïve that we believe that a local ban on retail sales of marijuana will prevent Guilford kids from obtaining and using cannabis. We are going to have that problem and we ask our Selectmen not to close your eyes to the damage this will cause some of our children. We are requesting the ban as a message to Guilford's parents and kids that marijuana consumption is a significant health risk for kids. In closing, we respectfully request that you adopt a stringent ordinance, and send a message that Guilford cares about the health of our youth.