

## Marijuana policy fact sheet

### **Legalizing and regulating marijuana would increase consumption among youth.**

- **Lower price equals higher consumption.** Prohibitions help to keep prices higher, and higher prices help keep use rates relatively low, since drug use, especially among young people, is known to be sensitive to price. According to a RAND Drug Policy Research Center report about the recent California proposition<sup>i</sup>, one effect of legalizing marijuana would be to dramatically drop the price as growers move from clandestine operations to legal production. In California, the untaxed retail price of high-quality marijuana could have dropped to as low as \$38 per ounce compared to about \$375 per ounce today, if their legalization proposition had passed.
- **Legal and regulated alcohol is the #1 drug of choice among youth.** Alcohol is legal and regulated and youth use it at much higher rates than marijuana, according to the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey. Most minors get alcohol from people they know and if marijuana is sold next to alcohol minors will have increased access to it through older siblings and friends.
- **Legalizing marijuana would increase youth perception that it is harmless.** With the legalization of medical marijuana and vocal proponents of full legalization touting it as risk-free, many youth view marijuana as a helpful medicine. Yet, marijuana is the primary reason that youth enter treatment<sup>ii</sup> <sup>iii</sup> and research has shown that marijuana is harmful to the developing brain and academic success<sup>iv</sup>.
- **Increased exposure at home.** Some adults may choose not to use marijuana because of the potential risk of criminal sanctions. If legalized, some parents may begin using marijuana, acting as a significant new source of exposure for their teenagers<sup>v</sup>. Parents are the primary role models for their children.

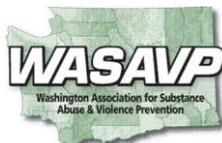
**Amount of potential tax revenue is unknown.** There are many factors that make it difficult to accurately estimate revenue that might be generated by any tax on legal marijuana<sup>vi</sup>. The higher the tax, the greater the incentives would be for a gray market in marijuana to develop. Low taxes contribute to lower prices leading to higher consumption rates among youth.

**Local law enforcement does not have the capacity to enforce laws related to minor's possession of marijuana or alcohol.** Across the state, local police and courts are facing reductions making the enforcement of minor in possession laws even less of a priority than they already are.

**Law enforcement savings may be minimal.** According to the fiscal note for HB1100 (re: medical cannabis), there are few, if any individuals in county or municipal jails solely for the possession of cannabis<sup>vii</sup>.

**Legalization of marijuana would result in advertising campaigns, some of which would reach adolescents.** Control measures to prevent advertising to young people, as experience with alcohol and tobacco industries demonstrates, are difficult to implement<sup>viii</sup>.

**Legalizing marijuana would harm Washington State youth.**



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<sup>i</sup> *Altered State? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets*, RAND Corporation, 2010

<sup>ii</sup> Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<sup>iii</sup> *Drug Abuse Trends in the Seattle-King County Area 2009*, University of Washington Alcohol and Drug Institute

<sup>iv</sup> *Adverse health effects of non-medical cannabis use*, The Lancet, October 17, 2009

<sup>v</sup> *Legalization of Marijuana: Potential Impact on Youth*, Pediatrics: Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, June 2004

<sup>vi</sup> *Altered State? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets*, RAND Corporation, 2010

<sup>vii</sup> Local Government Fiscal Note, Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Bill Number 1100 HB

<sup>viii</sup> *Legalization of Marijuana: Potential Impact on Youth*, Pediatrics, Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, June 2004