



# *The Benefits of Taxing and Regulating Marijuana*

Marijuana prohibition has been just as ineffective, inefficient, and problematic as alcohol prohibition was in the 1920s and 30s. That's surely part of the reason why 63 percent of Connecticut voters have come to believe cannabis should be legal for adults.

Marijuana prohibition has disrupted families, destroyed communities, and eroded trust in law enforcement, all at great taxpayer expense. Despite all of these enforcement costs over eight decades, we have nothing to show for it — marijuana is far easier to get and more popular than when prohibition began. Connecticut can and should take a new course of action: thoughtfully regulating marijuana. Doing so would have numerous benefits, including the following:

**Increasing freedom.** Marijuana is objectively less harmful than alcohol to the consumer and to society. It is less toxic, less harmful to the body, less addictive, and less likely to contribute to violent or reckless behavior. Adults should not be punished for making the safer choice to use marijuana instead of alcohol, if that is what they prefer.

**Replacing the illicit market.** Regulating marijuana like alcohol replaces the uncontrolled, illicit market with a tightly regulated system. By regulating marijuana, authorities know who is selling it, where it is being sold, when, and to whom. Marijuana will be produced and sold by legitimate, taxpaying businesses instead of drug cartels and criminals.

**Protecting youth.** Drug dealers don't card. Moving marijuana sales into state-licensed outlets would allow for strict regulations against selling to people under 21 years of age. Some of the taxes from sales could go towards drug abuse prevention programs that help reduce youth use. Honest drug education, like we have for tobacco and alcohol, are much more effective at reducing youth use than the fear mongering that comes along with prohibition: With increased public education and tight age restrictions, rates of teen alcohol and cigarette use are at 30-year lows.

**Promoting public health.** Apart from our small medical marijuana program, Connecticut's marijuana market is completely unregulated. Bringing it into the light would enable requirements for child-resistant packaging, testing products for contaminants, clear labeling with potency and serving sizes, and bans on products that are likely to appeal to children, such as gummy bears.

**Boosting the economy.** Regulating marijuana like alcohol will create thousands of good-paying jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, retail, and other fields. If Colorado is any guide, we could see well over 15,000 such jobs in Connecticut, and due to federal law, they would be impossible to outsource to other states. Taxing marijuana sales would bring in over \$180 million per year, allowing the state to avoid painful budget cuts or tax increases, allowing for new spending.

**Advancing social justice.** Marijuana prohibition has disproportionately targeted communities of color, and criminal records make it difficult to access many government services or even to get jobs, housing, or further one's education. The new system of licensing and regulation would stop the harm done by prohibition while creating new, legal opportunities. The coalition is committed to a system of regulation that is fair and equitable, providing opportunities for everyone.

**Saving state resources.** Law enforcement officials' time and resources would be better spent addressing serious crimes instead of arresting, citing, and prosecuting adults for marijuana. Meanwhile, clearance rates for many serious crimes are exceptionally low, and many never result in an arrest.