[Date]

The Honorable [First and last name of State Senator or Representative]

Senate Building (if Senator) 77 South High St. (if Representative)
1 Capitol Square 11th Floor
1st Floor Columbus, OH 43215

Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator/Representative [Last Name]

*[Please take a moment to personalize the opening of the letter, to include the why this issue matters to you.]* At a time when Ohio is experiencing a mental health crisis and all-time drug overdose records, I am deeply concerned about efforts to legalize marijuana for recreational use. It is very concerning that as a State we would consider increasing drug availability in our communities, especially, when youth already have increased access to and initiation of marijuana due to vape devices. Legalizing this drug has the potential to decrease our young people’s perception of harm, increase youth use and addiction rates, and change our community norms. As a [parent, pastor, grandparent, business owner, educator, etc.], I believe we have a responsibility to protect our youth and communities. As a resident of [insert county name] County and a citizen of Ohio, I’d ask that you strongly oppose any effort to legalize marijuana for recreational use.

Eight years of data from states that have welcomed the commercialization of marijuana have shown increases in addiction, cannabis and opioid use disorders, industrial accidents, hiring shortages, black market activity and crime, youth usage, and drugged driving leading to accidents and death. The latest research and science related to marijuana commercialization leaves no doubt that legalizing marijuana is a bad idea.

The talking points we most often hear regarding reasons to legalize are not supported by research or outcomes from states that have legalized.

**Please note:** [Feel free to use 2- 3 reasons below that most resonate, or pull from list of resources in email]

* Tax revenue from marijuana accounts for less than one percent of state revenues where the drug is legal. No “legal” state has met its initial tax revenue projections.
* The potency of THC, what gets you high, continues to rise from 1-3 % in the 1970’s to 12-23% today. THC concentrates can range anywhere between 20%-99%. Marijuana today is not the marijuana of the past. Why would we consider legalizing a drug that continues to increase in potency?
* People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are 4 to 7 times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use disorder. Legalizing will send a message to our youth that marijuana is not harmful, which has the potential to increase youth use.
* The marijuana industry targets kids by producing marijuana edibles in the forms of popular candy and snack brands and markets these drugs both offline and on social media.
* Marijuana is addictive and may cause mental illnesses or exacerbate mental illness to include anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, psychosis, schizophrenia, and these risks are heightened with youth use. Daily users of high potency THC are five times more likely to develop a severe mental illness.
* Marijuana use can severely affect brain development in youth, leading to lower IQ and worsening mental health, academic, professional outcomes and life satisfaction.
* Marijuana use has an association with future substance misuse and addiction.
* Marijuana is often advertised as a solution for the opioid epidemic, claiming that it can be a substitute for opioids in pain management and an effective treatment for opioid use disorder, yet the JAMA Internal Medicine Journal stated that, “The opioid crisis appears to be worsening where marijuana has been legalized.”
* According to a study reported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries, and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.
* In Colorado, one in every four road deaths has involved a marijuana-impaired driver.
* Illicit markets have thrived in every “legal” state, such as Oregon, where illegal marijuana makes up more than 70% of the market.
* Legalization is often touted as a social justice initiative aimed at decriminalizing marijuana and expunging the record of low-level offenders. However, it has shown not to have the intended effect on criminal justice reform. Marijuana arrests nearly tripled the year after legalization in Washington D.C. If we want criminal justice reform, we need to pass laws to create true reform, legalizing drugs cannot be our best option to criminal justice reform.
* Among concerns of systemic injustice against lower-income, minority communities, legalization of marijuana only harms these communities further by promoting increased drug use and the accompanying negative social consequences.
* A 2018 Centennial Institute study on the economic and social costs of legalized marijuana in Colorado found that it cost the state $4.50 to counteract the effects of marijuana legalization for each dollar brought in by marijuana tax revenues.

Please consider this information and, if you would like citations or more information, please feel free to reach out. I appreciate your time and your service and would ask that you act to protect our State, and my county, community, and family. I again urge you to oppose any efforts to legalize marijuana for recreational use.

Sincerely,

[Sign your name here]