Center FOR Christian Virtue
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April 30, 2025

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: David Mahan
Policy Director
Center for Christian Virtue

Re: HB160 proponent testimony

To Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn and the esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is David Mahan and I am the Policy Director for The Center for Christian Virtue, Ohio's largest Christian public policy organization. Today I am testifying in support of HB160, which places much needed regulations on extremely dangerous intoxicating hemp derived THC products.

It's been said that, "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it". This statement is often used when we are counseling someone about the need to change bad habits, or warning them about jumping into another terrible relationship. The discussion surrounding the subject of this legislation has much to do with both. Ohio has been flirting with the addiction for profit marijuana industry for nearly a decade, and in 2024 we finally "tied the knot". Unfortunately, we have failed to learn from the mistakes of other states as it relates to commercializing illegal narcotics, so now we must begin the process of learning the hard way. Whether the catch word is marijuana, cannabis, hemp, or intoxicating hemp, what we are dealing with are products that contain some degree of THC or CBD- both of which can be dangerous to children. The relationship becomes even more dysfunctional when the industry has the ability to cover-up the dangers of their products simply by toying with the law, a little chemistry and semantics. Hemp is a non-intoxicating variant of the cannabis plant and is legally defined as being below 0.3 percent THC. Chemically modifying hemp can produce "intoxicating hemp" products that contain the same cannabinoids as adult-use marijuana, in concentrations high enough to produce psychotic episodes. But with just a simple name and packaging change, intoxicating hemp products such as Delta-8 can be sold in convenient stores without any of the age or advertising restrictions that regulate adult-use products. Even the term "Marijuana" is deceptive these days. The naturally occurring plant that many giggle about smoking in the 60's was only 3-5%

THC, and even that was enough to cause intoxication in some users. Today's genetically altered plants can be as high as 35%, and the edibles and concentrates can be upwards of 95% THC. While these types of games and loop holes can no doubt be very lucrative to White Collar Dope Dealers, they have unfortunately proven harmful and even fatal for children. According to America's Poison Centers, The rate of **delta-8** THC exposures reported to poison centers across the country increased by 82% from 2021 to 2022.[1]

The fact is that what most of us used to think of as Marijuana no longer exists today. However, every time states start thinking about "breaking up" this codependent relationship with Big Marijuana, or at least getting counseling, the Industry keeps trying to keep us giggling and stuck in the "good ole days" before teen cannabis use disorders and THC related ER visits were a serious issue across the country.

The conversation has to change, and if we are still thinking of Marijuana as simply a gateway drug, our thinking must change in order to prevent many of the devastating impacts that the marijuana industry has had nationwide. For example in Colorado, who commercialized the drug in 2012, **the number one substance found in completed teen suicides is THC, more than TWICE that of alcohol (attached)**, but it took them a decade of kids killing themselves before they knew enough to do anything about it. However, after years of watching this industry and these drugs decimate state after state, Ohio no longer has the luxury of claiming ignorance. That said, while we support the efforts made in SB86 to regulate a widely overlooked sector of the addiction for profit marijuana industry, CCV would like to suggest two common sense amendments, based upon the lessons Colorado learned the **Hard Way**: 1. Detailed research and reporting legislation monitoring the impacts of THC related products, such as Colorado's HB21-1317[2] , and 2. Capping THC limits to at least that of the plants in Ohio, 35%. Even Amsterdam caps THC potency at 15%!

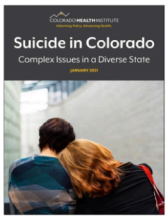
As Ohioans are already struggling with epidemic rates of addiction, historically high crime, and a mental health crisis, how does one come to the conclusion that Big Marijuana could actually be trusted to regulate themselves? Again, I would like to thank the sponsors of SB86 for this great first step in regaining some sense of sanity around this issue. I would also invite you all to learn more about marijuana and intoxicating hemp, by listening to a podcast CCV recently recorded with **Dr. Ken Finn, who advises state legislatures and the United Nations on the subject.** The

[1] https://poisoncenters.org/news-alerts/13302763
[2] https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_1317_signed.pdf

Narrative Podcast episode can be found HERE. (https://www.ccv.org/news/smoke-and-mirrors-the-devastation-of-marijuana-legalization-with-dr-ken-finn) .

Thank you for your time and consideration.

The Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that endeavors to create an Ohio where God's blessings of life, family, and religious freedom are treasured, respected, and protected. *www.ccv.org* -- (513) 733-5775



Marijuana is the #1 substance found in Teen suicide victims

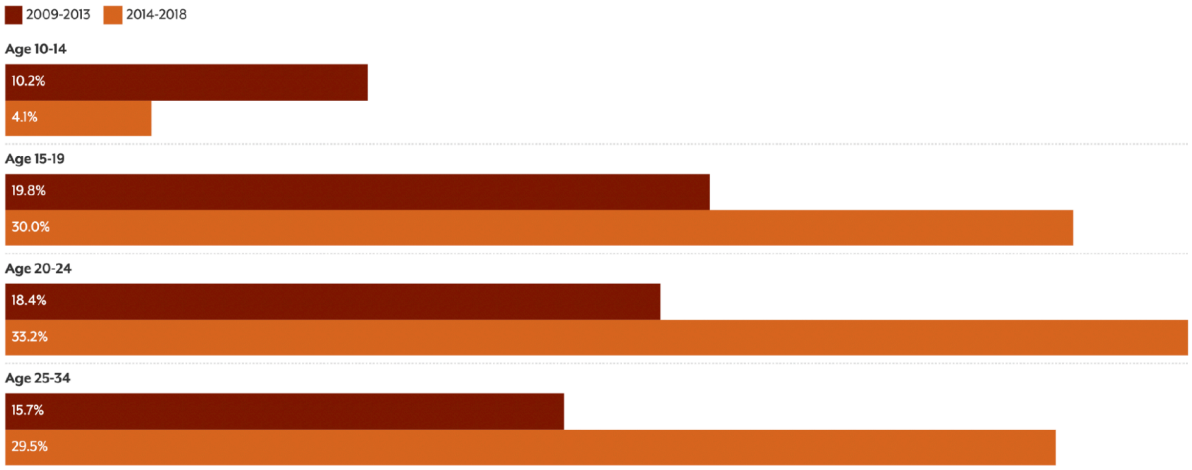
Suicide in Colorado

Complex Issues in a Diverse State

Published: January 26, 2021 | Updated: May 8, 2023

From 2014-2018, 30% of suicide deaths among youth ages 15-19 had marijuana present, an increase from 19.8% during 2009-2013. Alcohol was present in 12.1% of suicide deaths among 15- to 19-year-olds between 2014-2018

Figure 6. Marijuana Present in Suicide Deaths by Age



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