

A close-up photograph of a cannabis plant. The image shows several serrated, green leaves with prominent veins. In the center-left, there is a dense cluster of developing buds, which are covered in fine, white trichomes. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting more foliage.

Commercialization of Recreational Cannabis Impact Report

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

Commercialization of Recreational Cannabis Impact Report

Table of Contents:

Statement of Law Enforcement Leadership	2
Statement of Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney	3
National Cannabis Legislation	4
2024 Hawaii Legislative Session Review of Senate Bill 3335	5
Impact Review of States that have Commercialized Recreational Cannabis	10
A. California	11
B. Colorado	11
C. New Jersey	11
D. New Mexico	12
E. Oregon	12
Law Enforcement Impact - Honolulu Police Department	13
Incarceration Numbers by County	00
Impact on Adolescents	16
Impact on Rehabilitation Services	16
Impact on Education Systems	17
Impact on Communities	18
Impact on Environment	20
Recommendations to Improve the Access to Medical Cannabis	23
Summary of Impact of Legalization of Recreational Cannabis	24

Statements of Law Enforcement Leadership



**Arthur J. Logan, Chief of Police
Honolulu Police Department**

Aloha,

The debate over the legalization of marijuana is not new. For many years, the pro-marijuana supporters have pushed for legalization of all forms. They say it will bring in added tax revenue, make marijuana safer for users, shrink the illegal black market, and much more.

After researching the potential impacts on the cities that have legalized recreational marijuana, we know this is not true. This report summarizes the primary concerns surrounding legalization and paints a picture of what Honolulu could expect should we choose the same path. Hawai'i is special in many ways, but we are not immune to the problems associated with recreational marijuana use.

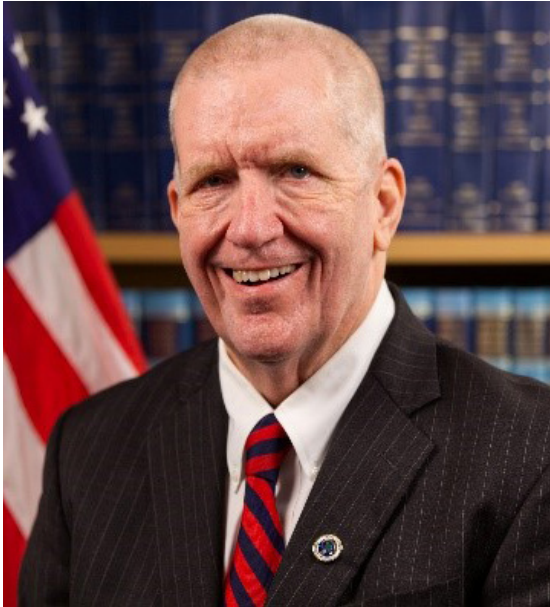
Today's marijuana is several times more potent than that of the past and poses significant health risks. All of the health dangers associated with smoking tobacco and vaping are the same for marijuana, including respiratory problems and secondhand smoke. Cities with recreational marijuana have also seen increases in accidental poisonings, emergency room visits, and toxicology reports with marijuana. Poor school attendance and higher drop rates have also been seen.

From a financial perspective, gains in tax revenue will be reduced by the costs of regulatory testing, enforcement operations, education programs, and addiction and rehabilitation services. Despite marijuana advocates' claims, none of the cities on the continent saw a drop in black market sales. In some cities, legitimate marijuana retailers were forced out of business because they could not compete with illegal sellers.

We must be responsible stewards of Hawai'i's natural environment. Marijuana is a water-intensive crop that requires pesticides and fertilizers when grown on a large scale. Indoor cultivation uses less water but relies on round-the-clock artificial lighting, heating, and ventilation systems that consume energy and emit carbon. Growing marijuana on a large scale does not make sense for Honolulu.

As the head of the state's largest law enforcement agency, I urge you to heed the experience of other cities. By not allowing recreational marijuana, we are preserving a healthier future for ourselves and future generations.

Serving and Protecting With Aloha.



**Steven S. Alm, Prosecuting Attorney
Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney**

As the Honolulu Prosecutor, my number 1 goal is protecting the people of Honolulu. Legalizing the growing and selling of commercial (recreational) marijuana will hurt Honolulu and its people.

Personal use (up to three grams or six joints) of marijuana has already been decriminalized. Medical marijuana is available. By keeping commercial marijuana illegal, we are sending the right message to our kids: Marijuana is not harmless, and the government is not encouraging marijuana use by legalizing this now-powerful drug and promoting this addiction-for-profit industry that will generate some tax dollars.

There is now good quality research showing that legalizing today's potent marijuana (with concentrates over 95 percent) has negative effects on children, teens, and young adults by increasing their use of it, lowering intelligence quotient, causing problems with problem-solving and memory, and unintended poisoning requiring hospitalization (from kid-friendly pot gummies and candies). For adults and kūpuna, legalization leads to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke, emergency departmental visits, developing marijuana use disorder (one of three users, many of whom become addicted), increased traffic collisions and fatalities, increased mental health problems including schizophrenia, and hurting military readiness as a single positive marijuana test leads to discharge from the service.

Law enforcement will be directly impacted by robberies of grow sites and marijuana stores, the increased presence of Mexican and Chinese cartel members involved with illegal grows, and the violence that it brings.

Given that commercial legalization leads to more overall marijuana use, the black market actually increases (because it will always be cheaper), and thus, the chances of being poisoned by dangerous additives like fentanyl actually increase with legalization.

Let's protect our keiki, our adults, and our kūpuna and reject the legalization of commercial (recreational) marijuana.

National Cannabis Legislation

The legalization of recreational marijuana has increased nationally. As of May 2024, there are 24 states that have enacted laws allowing for the use of marijuana for recreational consumption (Bryan, 2024). These jurisdictions have created regulatory agencies that are responsible for enforcing standards related to the commercial market activities of the marijuana industry. These regulatory agencies are envisioned to provide the same consumer and community protection for marijuana as they do for the alcohol industry.

The community's view on the recreational use of marijuana has continued to increase in popularity, although it is not a new concept. Decriminalization of marijuana at the state level has been occurring over the last 50 years (CRS Reports, 2024). Decriminalization removes or lowers the criminal penalties associated with the simple possession of user amounts of marijuana. In some jurisdictions, it may only result in civil penalties, like receiving a citation for a traffic infraction. The continued support of the decriminalization of marijuana has led to several submissions by federal legislators to legalize cannabis all together and set forth a framework for consistent regulation.

2023-2024 Federal Legislation: (Congress.gov, 2023)

1. "Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act" or the "MORE Act" (H.R. 5601)

Summary: To decriminalize and deschedule cannabis to provide for reinvestment in certain persons adversely impacted by the War on Drugs, to provide for expungement of certain cannabis offenses, and for other purposes.

2. "States Reform Act of 2023" (H.R. 6028)

Summary: To amend the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) regarding marijuana, and for other purposes. Marijuana would be removed from the CSA and tasked to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with the regulation of cannabis.

3. "Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States 2.0 Act" or the "STATES 2.0 Act" (H.R. 6673)

Summary: To amend the CSA to provide for a new rule regarding the application of the Act to marijuana and for other purposes. Marijuana would be removed from the CSA and tasked to the FDA with the regulation of cannabis.

4. "Marijuana 1-to-3 Act of 2023" (H.R. 610)

Summary: To provide for the rescheduling of marijuana into Schedule III of the CSA.

Many people believe that the support for the "Marijuana 1-to-3 Act of 2023," signals an acceptance of general marijuana utilization by the federal government; however, a few examples of Schedule III drugs, substances, or chemicals include products containing less than 90 milligrams of

codeine per dosage unit (Tylenol with codeine), ketamine, anabolic steroids, and testosterone (DEA, 2024). All of those drugs require a prescription from a licensed medical professional. Schedule III drugs are defined as "drugs with a moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence. Schedule III drugs abuse potential is less than Schedule I and Schedule II drugs but more than Schedule IV" (DEA, 2024). That definition is a far cry from those that interpret the change as meaning the federal government stating that marijuana is not dangerous.

To provide better context to what Schedule III is, Schedule II includes products with less than 15 milligrams of hydrocodone per dosage unit (Vicodin), cocaine, methamphetamine, methadone, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), meperidine (Demerol), oxycodone (OxyContin), fentanyl, Dexedrine, Adderall, and Ritalin. While Schedule IV includes Xanax, Soma, Darvon, Darvocet, Valium, Ativan, Talwin, Ambien, and Tramadol, some of which are opioid-based medicine (DEA, 2024), marijuana would now fall in between those two classes of substances.

The true significance of the rescheduling of marijuana from a Schedule I to Schedule III drug is that the federal government would then be acknowledging that marijuana does have potential medical value. This would then streamline the research process by allowing scientists greater access to cannabis for clinical studies with less government regulation.

References:

Bryan, K. (2024, June 20).

Cannabis overview. NCSL.

<https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/cannabis-overview>

CRS Reports. (2024, May 2).

The federal status of marijuana and the policy gap with States.

Congressional Research Service.
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12270>

DEA. (2024, July 10). Drug

Scheduling. Retrieved from

<https://www.dea.gov/drug-information/drug-scheduling>

Congress.Gov. (2023, September 22). H.R.5601 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): More act.

[https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5601#:~:text=Shown Here;\(09/20/2023\)&text=This bill decriminalizes marijuana,, distributes, or possesses marijuana.](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5601#:~:text=Shown Here;(09/20/2023)&text=This bill decriminalizes marijuana,, distributes, or possesses marijuana.)

2024 Hawai'i Legislative Session Review of Senate Bill 3335

Cannabis reform had a strong run during the 2024 Hawai'i Legislative session. Though several bills were introduced that focused on decriminalization and expungement, Senate Bill No. 3335 (SB3335) was focused on providing the framework for establishing recreational cannabis. At over 300 pages long, it attempted to create a comprehensive framework to address regulation standards for recreational and medical cannabis, as well as hemp.

Legislative Timeline and Legislator Voting

1-24-24 – Introduced by the Hawai'i State Senate

SPONSORS

Senator Brenton Awa	Senator Jarrett Keohokalole
Senator Stanley Chang	Senator Michelle Kidani
Senator Lynn Decoite	Senator Donna Kim
Senator Kurt Fevella	Senator Chris Lee
Senator Dru Kanuha	Senator Joy San Buenaventura

SENATE		2-13-24				
Health and Human Services Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	ABSENT
Senator	Henry	Aquino	x			
Senator	Brenton	Awa	x			
Senator	Jarrett	Keohokalole	x			
Senator	Joy	San Buenaventura	x			
Senator	Maile	Shimabukuro	x			
Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (5 to 0)						

SENATE		2-13-24				
Judiciary Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Senator	Brenton	Awa	x			
Senator	Brandon	Elefante		x		
Senator	Mike	Gabbard				x
Senator	Karl	Rhoads	x			
Senator	Joy	San Buenaventura	x			
Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (3 to 1)						

Legislative Timeline and Legislator Voting

SENATE		3-1-24				
Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Senator	Brenton	Awa	x			
Senator	Carol	Fukunaga	x			
Senator	Jarrett	Keohokalole	x			
Senator	Angus	McKelvey				x
Senator	Herbert	Richards III	x			

Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (4 to 0)

SENATE		3-1-24				
Ways and Means Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Senator	Henry	Aquino	x			
Senator	Donovan	Dela Cruz	x			
Senator	Lynn	Decoite	x			
Senator	Kurt	Fevella		x		
Senator	Troy	Hashimoto	x			
Senator	Lorraine	Rodero		x		
Senator	Dru	Kanuha	x			
Senator	Michelle	Kidani		x		
Senator	Donna	Kim	x			
Senator	Chris	Lee	x			
Senator	Sharon	Moriwaki		x		
Senator	Maile	Shimabukuro				x
Senator	Glenn	Wakai		x		

Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (7 to 5)

SENATE		3-5-24 – Transmitted to House				
--------	--	-------------------------------	--	--	--	--

Legislative Timeline and Legislator Voting

House		3-13-24				
Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Representative	Luke	Evslin	x			
Representative	Sonny	Ganaden	x			
Representative	Daniel	Holt	x			
Representative	Linda	Ichiyama		x		
Representative	Greggor	Ilagan	x			
Representative	Tyson	Miyake	x			
Representative	Sam	Kong		x		
Representative	Kanani	Souza		x		
Representative	Gregg	Takayama	x			
Representative	David	Tarnas	x			

Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (7 to 3)

House		3-13-24				
Agriculture and Food Systems Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Representative	Elle	Cochran	x			
Representative	Cedric	Gates	x			
Representative	Kirstin	Kahaloa	x			
Representative	Nicole	Lowen	x			
Representative	Amy	Perruso				x
Representative	Gene	Ward		x		
Representative	Justin	Woodson	x			

Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (5 to 1)

House		3-19-24				
Consumer Protection and Commerce Committee			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Representative	Terez	Amato	x			
Representative	Della	Au Belatti	x			
Representative	Cedric	Gates	x			
Representative	Mark	Hashem		x		
Representative	Natalia	Hussey-Burdick	x			
Representative	Nicole	Lowen	x			
Representative	Mark	Nakashima	x			
Representative	Richard	Onishi		x		
Representative	Elijah	Pierick		x		
Representative	Jackson	Sayama				x
Representative	Adrian	Tam	x			

Status: PASSED WITH AMMENDMENTS (7 to 3)

Legislative Timeline and Legislator Voting

HOUSE		3-22-24				
House 2nd Reading			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Representative	Micah	Aiu		x		
Representative	David	Alcos III		x		
Representative	Terez	Amato	x			
Representative	Della	Au Belatti	x			
Representative	Cory	Chun		x		
Representative	Elle	Cochran	x			
Representative	Luke	Evslin	x			
Representative	Sonny	Ganaden	x			
Representative	Diamond	Garcia		x		
Representative	Andrew	Garrett		x		
Representative	Cedric	Gates	x			
Representative	Mark	Hashem		x		
Representative	Daniel	Holt	x			
Representative	Natalia	Hussey-Burdick	x			
Representative	Linda	Ichiyama		x		
Representative	Greggor	Ilagan	x			
Representative	Kirstin	Kahaloe	x			
Representative	Jeanne	Kapela	x			
Representative	Darius	Kila		x		
Representative	Lisa	Kitagawa		x		
Representative	Bertrand	Kobayshi		x		
Representative	Sam	Kong		x		
Representative	Trish	La Chica		x		
Representative	Rachele	Lamosao		x		
Representative	Nicole	Lowen	x			
Representative	Lisa	Marten	x			
Representative	Rose	Martinez				x
Representative	Scott	Matayoshi		x		
Representative	Lauren	Matsumoto		x		
Representative	Tyson	Miyake	x			
Representative	May	Mizuno	x			
Representative	Dee	Morikawa	x			
Representative	Nadine	Nakamura	x			
Representative	Mark	Nakashima				x
Representative	Scott	Nishimoto		x		
Representative	Richard	Onishi		x		
Representative	Amy	Perruso	x			
Representative	Elijah	Pierick		x		
Representative	Mahina	Poepoe	x			

(CONTINUED)

Legislative Timeline and Legislator Voting

HOUSE		3-22-24				
House 2nd Reading (Continued)			YEA	NAY	NOT VOTING	EXCUSED
Representative	Sean	Quinlan				X
Representative	Scott	Saiki	X			
Representative	Jackson	Sayama	X			
Representative	Kanani	Souza		X		
Representative	Gregg	Takayama		X		
Representative	Jenna	Takenouchi		X		
Representative	Adrian	Tam	X			
Representative	David	Tarnas	X			
Representative	Chris	Todd	X			
Representative	Gene	Ward		X		
Representative	Justin	Woodson		X		
Representative	Kyle	Yamashita	X			

Status: REPORT ADOPTED REFERRED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE (25 to 23)

The House Finance Committee decided not to schedule a hearing for SB3335, because the issue was too divisive at a time when the Lahaina fire recovery was the priority. This effectively killed the bill for the 2024 Hawai'i Legislative Session. The other major cannabis legislation also died throughout the legislative process.

Throughout the legislative session, the focal point of the support for recreational marijuana was the belief in creating upwards of \$80 million in annual tax revenue, regulating the quality of cannabis to improve the safety of utilizers, and decreasing incarceration rates for petty offenses. The tax revenue projections are intended to entice the legislators into believing that recreational cannabis can be a beneficial income stream for the State of Hawai'i tax collections. The initial upfront cost of the measure was stated to be approximately \$38.7 million, which is divided into several

initiatives to include regulation, social equity programs, public health and enforcement, public safety, cannabis law enforcement, and cannabis nuisance abatement. This would only yield a net collection of approximately \$41 million (\$28.47 per capita annually) based on Hawai'i's population of 1.44 million (2022).

References:

Hawaii SB3335: 2024: Regular session. LegiScan. (2024, March 22).
<https://legiscan.com/HI/research/SB3335/2024>

Impact Review of States That Have Commercialized Recreational Cannabis

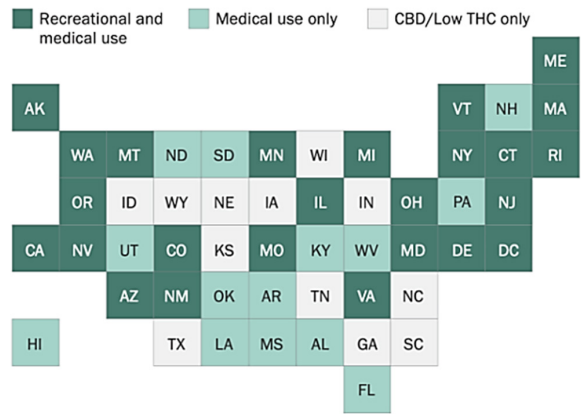
This report highlights five jurisdictions to assess the potential funding impact of recreational cannabis based on their reported revenue and regulation costs. The states that were selected in this report were based on comparison models provided by pro-cannabis advocates during the 2024 Hawai'i Legislative Session. The Pew Research Center stated, "Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia have legalized small amounts of marijuana for both medical and recreational use as of March 2024, according to the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), an advocacy group that tracks state-level legislation on the issue" (Shaeffer, 2024).

No jurisdiction in the United States has been able to reduce or meaningfully impact the black market cannabis industry. In many cases, legal cannabis retailers are being put out of business because they are unable to compete with the local black market. Law enforcement agencies nationwide are being impacted by the sprawling illegal indoor or outdoor grows. States like California had to create specialty enforcement initiatives, such as the Unified Cannabis Enforcement Taskforce (UCETF). The UCETF was created in 2022 by Governor Gavin Newsom in response to the black market's adverse impact on the growing legal market (State of California, 2024). The UCETF is responsible for coordinating multiagency, cross-jurisdictional operations to collectively address illegal cannabis operations, including

transnational criminal organizations. The exact cost of cannabis regulation and enforcement is unknown due to expanded cannabis use impacts. The following cost values are based on the reported price for the primary agencies responsible for cannabis regulation and enforcement.

Nearly half of states have legalized the recreational use of marijuana

Legal allowance of marijuana at the state level, as of February 2024



Note: Nebraska's state laws only allow low-THC CBD products derived from hemp. All products derived from marijuana are prohibited.
Source: National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, current to February 2024.

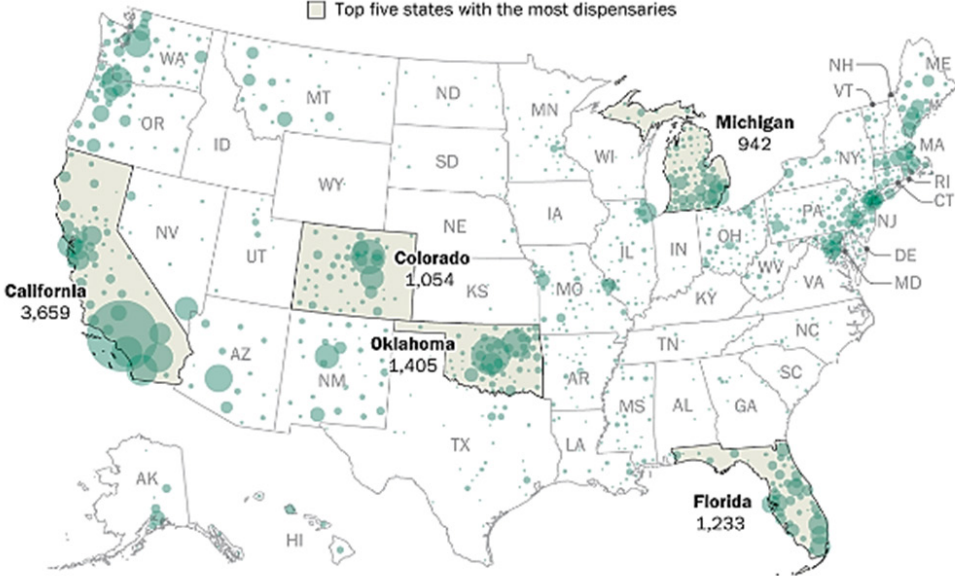
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Cannabis dispensaries are common along the coasts and in a few specific states

Number of cannabis dispensaries in each county



Top five states with the most dispensaries



Note: Includes dispensaries that sell cannabis for both recreational and medical purposes, as well as those selling cannabis products containing low amounts of THC or CBD-only products.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of SafeGraph data for cannabis dispensaries in the U.S. (N=14,932) as of June 23, 2023.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

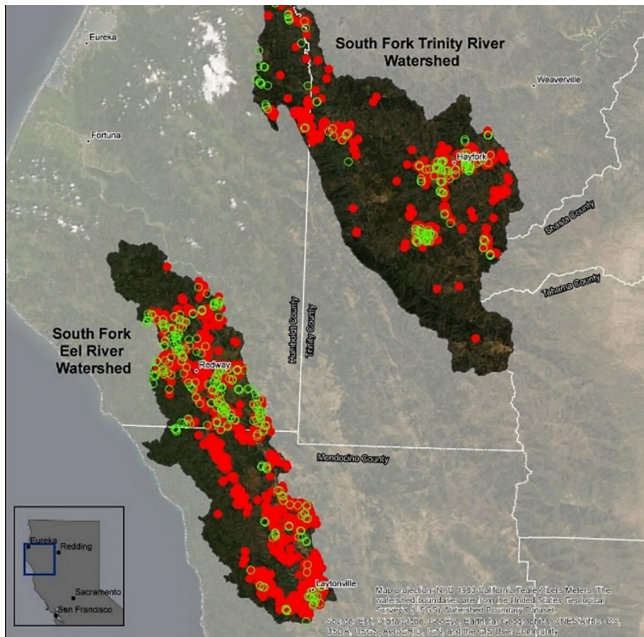
California

- Recreational Marijuana Legalization: 2018
- Population: 39.03 million (2022)
- Annual State Budget: \$288 billion (2024)
- Cannabis Tax Income: \$1.1 billion (2023)
- Cannabis Control Budget: \$163 million (2024)

Net Annual Tax Income = approximately \$937 million
(\$24 per capita annually)

IMPACT

The California Department of Cannabis Control (DCC) has only begun to address the widespread proliferation of black market operations. Mr. Bill Jones, the DCC's head of enforcement, stated, "The black market is very pervasive, and it's definitely larger than the legal market" (Kaste, 2024).



CannaVision's introduction to the governor's office included this map showing unlicensed cannabis activity (red) surpassing licensed farms (green) within the Emerald Triangle. (California State Water Resources Control Board)



Courtesy of El Paso County Sheriff's Office

Colorado

- Recreational Marijuana Legalization: 2013
- Population: 5.84 million (2022)
- Annual State Budget: \$40.6 billion (2024)
- Cannabis Tax Income: \$282.3 million (2022-2023)
- Cannabis Control Budget: \$25.7 million (2020-2021)

Net Tax Income = approximately \$256.6 million
(\$44 per capita annually)

IMPACT

A September 2021 publication by the Colorado High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) initiative showed that since recreational cannabis legalization passed, there has been a 26 percent increase in use for ages 12 to 17 and a 20 percent increase in use for ages 18 and over. The same report showed that the number of suicides in which marijuana was present in the toxicology report grew from 14 percent in 2013 to 29 percent in 2019 (HIDTA, 2021).



Courtesy of Erik Bernstein Photography via The Philadelphia Inquirer

New Jersey

- Recreational Marijuana Legalization: 2021
- Population: 9.29 million (2023)
- Annual State Budget: \$56.7 billion (2024)
- Cannabis Tax Income: \$45.08 million (2023)
- Cannabis Control Budget: Unreported

Net Annual Tax Income = approximately \$45.08 million
(\$4.85 per capita annually)

IMPACT

A motivation for New Jersey to legalize cannabis was that only safe, tested, and approved products would be sold, and access would only be available to adults. Unfortunately, the illegal market moved out of the shadows and into storefronts, which locals call the "grey market" (Porrino & Slocum, 2023). The "grey market" in New Jersey is a storefront location where the product is legal, but the operator is not licensed to sell, which presents a risk to consumers and youths. The illegal market will always hold a competitive advantage over legal sellers due to the increased operational cost of licensure and taxation.

New Mexico

- Recreational Marijuana Legalization: 2021
- Population: 2.113 million (2022)
- Annual State Budget: \$10.21 billion (2024)
- Cannabis Tax Income: \$21.81 million (2022)
- Cannabis Control Budget: \$6.54 million (2023)

Net Annual Tax Income = approximately \$15.27 million (\$7.22 per capita annually)

IMPACT:

New Mexico is facing an oversaturation of businesses, and some supporters of recreational cannabis are recommending that the state stop issuing permits that allow dispensaries to operate outside of set boundaries. Initially, there were guidelines that dispensaries had to follow in relation to their distances from churches, schools, and parks, but special permits are allowing those rules to be circumvented. This has led to nearly 3,000 cannabis licenses being issued across New Mexico as of January 1, 2024 (Coker, 2024). This leads to an overwhelming amount of regulation that needs to be completed. The New Mexico Cannabis Control Division performed more than 1,000 inspections of licensed businesses in 2023, leaving potentially 2,000 businesses unchecked annually (Coker, 2024). Issuing more licenses than can be regulated will result in poor quality control and an increase in illegal operations.

Oregon

- Recreational Marijuana Legalization: 2015
- Population: 4.24 million (2022)
- Annual State Budget: \$67.9 billion (2023)
- Cannabis Tax Income: \$169.4 million (2023)
- Cannabis Control Budget: \$48.4 million (2023)

Net Annual Tax Income = approximately \$121 million (\$28.54 per capita annually)

IMPACT:

In September 2021, the Oregon State Police, in collaboration with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, executed 25 search warrants because of a yearlong investigation into Fayao “Paul” Rong (Hayes, 2024). It resulted in nearly 33,000 marijuana plants, 1,800 pounds of packaged marijuana, 23 firearms, and more than \$591,000 in cash. The investigation led authorities to believe that Rong’s organization trafficked more than \$13.2 million in black market marijuana. Black markets are pathways to violence as organizations vie for control over illegal markets, which is supported by the number of firearms recovered in the Rong investigation.



A labyrinthine network of unpermitted greenhouses, filled with cannabis plants, sprang up in the northeastern corner of the Navajo Nation. Wufei Yu/Initium Media



File – Police seized more than 8,700 plants from a suspected illegal grow operation west of Junction City. Lane County Sheriff's Office

References:

- Schaeffer, K. (2024, April 10). 9 facts about Americans and marijuana. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/10/facts-about-marijuana/>
- State of California. (2024, October 22). California seizes over \$70 million in illegal cannabis since July. Governor of California. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2024/10/22/california-seizes-over-70-million-in-illegal-cannabis-since-july/>
- Kaste, M. (2024, April 5). Black Market Cannabis thrives in California despite legalization. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/05/1242165136/black-market-cannabis-california-legalization-marijuana-recreational-illegal>
- HIDTA. (2021, September). The legalization of marijuana in Colorado. HIDTA Colorado. <https://www.prevention.org/Resources/0dbad5e3-9eba-4400-aa36-1f1b4e8b24b8/RMHIDTA-Marijuana-Report-2021.pdf>
- Porrino, C., & Slocum, P. (2023, February 16). Former AG: Local prosecutors need to step up and shut down New Jersey's illegal cannabis market: Opinion. nj. <https://www.nj.com/opinion/2022/07/former-ag-local-prosecutors-need-to-step-up-and-shut-down-new-jerseys-illegal-cannabis-market-opinion.html>
- Coker, J. (2024, January 12). New Mexican cannabis operators voice concern over current market conditions. KRWG Public Media. <https://www.krwg.org/krwg-news/2024-01-12/new-mexican-cannabis-operators-voice-concern-over-current-market-conditions>
- Hayes, D. (2024, April 10). Polk county helps dethrone marijuana “dynasty.” Itemizer-Observer, pp. A1–A6.

Law Enforcement Impact - Honolulu Police Department



The Honolulu Police Department (HPD) serves as the primary law enforcement agency for the entire island of O'ahu. The Chief of Police directs the operation and administration of the department and is responsible for the following:

- Preservation of the public peace.
- Protection of the rights of persons and property.
- Prevention of crime.
- Detection and arrest of offenders against the law.
- Enforcement and prevention of violations of state laws and city ordinances.
- Service of processes and notices in civil and criminal proceedings.

The department's jurisdiction is the City and County of Honolulu, which has a circumference of approximately 137 miles and an area of approximately 596 square miles. The estimated resident population is 996,300, including military personnel but not tourists. For police operations, the island is divided into eight patrol districts; each district is subdivided into sectors and beats. The department's headquarters is at 801 South Beretania Street in downtown Honolulu. District stations are found in Kalihi, Kane'ohe, Kapolei, Pearl City, Wahiawā, and Wai'anae.

As the primary agency, much of the enforcement and regulatory responsibilities would fall on the HPD for the island of O'ahu. There would need to be an increase

in resources dedicated to cannabis enforcement and regulation for the HPD to be successful in minimizing the impact of a thriving black market, which has been observed in other states following the legalization of recreational marijuana. There would also need to be four teams of full-time officers dedicated to identifying illegal grows and conducting inspections of licensed grows and dispensaries. Each team would be made up of one sergeant, two corporals, and three officers. One lieutenant would be responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the cannabis enforcement teams. Additionally, the increase in cannabis testing for potency and safety testing would require the purchase of additional equipment. These estimates are in addition to the already funded positions and equipment in the Narcotics/Vice Division and the Scientific Investigation Section.

The projected cost only includes direct enforcement and regulation costs. Indirect costs related to the necessity for more drug recognition experts for potential increases in Operating a Vehicle Under the Influence of an Intoxicant (OVUII) cases or Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers to address increases in mental health calls related to the impacts of Cannabis Use Disorder are not included and would be difficult to fairly project. However, based on national data points, there have been increases in both police service call types once recreational cannabis becomes legal.

TITLE ?

STAFFING	AMOUNT	SALARY	LINE TOTAL
ENFORCEMENT TEAM			
Lieutenant (L4 Motorized)	1	\$253,320.00	\$253,320.00
Sergeant (L3 Motorized)	4	\$222,912.00	\$891,648.00
Corporal (L1 Motorized)	8	\$188,628.00	\$1,509,024.00
Officer (D Non-Motor)	12	\$166,944.00	\$2,003,328.00
Secretary II (SR14 Step C)	2	\$83,244.00	\$166,488.00
LABORATORY / SIS			
Criminalist III	1	\$125,760.00	\$125,760.00
Criminalist II	3	\$111,732.00	\$335,196.00
CATEGORY TOTAL			\$5,284,764.00

RECURRING COST	AMOUNT	COST	LINE TOTAL
ENFORCEMENT TEAM			
Surveyor Contract	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Protective Equipment Sets	25	\$500.00	\$12,500.00
LABORATORY / SIS			
Testing Supplies	1	\$67,700.00	\$67,700.00
Instrument Maintenance Contracts	1	\$131,250.00	\$131,250.00
Accreditation	1	\$11,600.00	\$11,600.00
Waste Disposal	1	\$11,000.00	\$11,000.00
Compressed Gas	1	\$16,770.00	\$16,770.00
CATEGORY TOTAL			\$300,820.00

STAFFING	AMOUNT	SALARY	LINE TOTAL	EQUIPMENT LIFE
ENFORCEMENT TEAM				
Full Size Crew Cab Truck	4	\$60,000.00	\$240,000.00	6 years
ATV with Trailer	4	\$40,000.00	\$160,000.00	6 years
Law Enforcement Grade Drone	4	\$20,000.00	\$80,000.00	3 years
Laptops with Air Card	25	\$2,000.00	\$50,000.00	3 years
Power and Hand Tool Set	4	\$2,000.00	\$8,000.00	3 years
LABORATORY / SIS				
THC Potency Test Equipment Set	2	\$95,000.00	\$190,000.00	5 years
THC Full Testing Equipment Set	2	\$842,250.00	\$1,684,500.00	5 years
Gas Line Installation	1	\$29,000.00	\$29,000.00	5 years
CATEGORY TOTAL			\$5,284,764	

ANNUAL	\$5,585,584.00
VARIABLE	\$2,433,500.00
TOTAL INITIAL COST	\$8,019,084.00

CAPTION?

Marijuana Enforcement Numbers in the City and County of Honolulu

During the 2024 Hawai'i Legislative Session, supporters of the legalization of recreational marijuana stated that current laws against illegal possession of marijuana ruin lives due to the impact that incarceration may have on an individual and their families. However, misdemeanor arrest and citation data show that user amounts of marijuana rarely result in citations in relation to all criminal citations issued, and even less common is the likelihood of arrest. Since 2020, arrests for illegal possession of marijuana only accounted for less than .27percent of all arrests made by the Honolulu Police Department.

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
CRIMINAL CITATIONS	5,003	5,940	7,363	24,620	14,377	9,089	7,200
MARIJUANA CITATIONS	259	357	240	212	122	133	109
MARIJUANA CITATIONS %	5.18%	6.01%	3.26%	0.86%	0.85%	1.46%	1.51%
TOTAL ARREST	41,394	40,442	40,464	23,122	21,954	23,287	22,772
MARIJUANA ARREST	443	407	358	63	59	47	46
MARIJUANA ARREST %	1.07%	1.01%	0.88%	0.27%	0.27%	0.20%	0.20%

Enforcement related to misdemeanor possession of marijuana.

These numbers show that being arrested for user amounts of illegal marijuana is unlikely as represented in the 46 arrests in 2023. Although the enforcement of user amounts of illegal marijuana is rare, removing it as an illegal substance in its entirety can reduce an officer's ability to engage in legal encounters that could lead to more serious offenses.

Having smaller possession offenses is particularly useful in building distribution cases against individuals who are adversely impacting the community through illicit drug sales. Many distributors of illegal narcotics will sell marijuana in conjunction with other drugs, such as methamphetamine, cocaine, opioids, or other banned substances. As currently written in SB3335 (2024) an individual may possess up to one ounce of adult-use cannabis on their person or up to two pounds of cannabis in a private residence. This would make it increasingly difficult to identify distributors over individuals who are abiding by the language of SB3335 (2024).

Currently, under Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) 712-1249.5, Commercial promotion of marijuana in the second degree, the possession of two pounds or more is a class B felony, which is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. If passed, SB3335 (2024) would render any possession offense beneath HRS 712-1249.5 legal in a private residence. At

the street dealer level under SB3335 (2024), an individual could legally be in possession of an ounce of cannabis flower as they traverse the city, which would currently be a misdemeanor in violation of HRS 712-1248, Promoting a detrimental drug in the second degree. An ounce of cannabis flower can create over 50 marijuana cigarettes commonly referred to as "joints." An individual could not reasonably or sensibly consume that much marijuana for personal use, and in many cases, the additional marijuana would likely be sold or consumed irresponsibly by other members of the community.

In summary, the legalization of recreational marijuana would be unlikely to have any impact on incarceration rates as nearly all the misdemeanor possession arrests will result in a time served and a fine. There would also not be any meaningful improvement to police services due to the negligible number of individuals who are arrested or cited annually. Continuing to have marijuana possession amounts of more than three grams as a criminal offense is the best way to ensure that law enforcement can intercept and identify individuals who may be distributing illicit drugs while acknowledging that small, personal amounts should not result in going to jail.

Impact of Recreational Marijuana on Adolescents

Recreational marijuana use among adolescents poses significant risks to their health and development. Research has shown that marijuana use during adolescence can have long-lasting and detrimental effects on the developing brain, mental health, and overall well-being.

First, marijuana use during adolescence can impair cognitive functions. The adolescent brain is still developing, and exposure to marijuana can disrupt this process. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), marijuana use can lead to difficulties in thinking, problem-solving, and memory retention (CDC, 2024). These cognitive impairments can negatively impact academic performance and future career prospects.

Second, marijuana use is associated with an increased risk of mental health issues. Adolescents who use marijuana are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders. A study by the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry found that marijuana use in adolescence is linked to a higher risk of depression and suicidal behavior (Columbia University, 2023). Additionally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that marijuana use can exacerbate symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia, particularly in individuals with a predisposition to these conditions (SAMHSA, 2024).

Furthermore, marijuana use during adolescence can lead to addiction. Adolescents are more susceptible to developing cannabis use disorder compared to adults. The CDC states

that approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have cannabis use disorder, and the risk is higher for those who start using marijuana during adolescence (CDC, 2024). This addiction can lead to a range of negative consequences, including impaired social relationships, decreased academic achievement, and reduced life satisfaction.

In conclusion, the negative impact of recreational marijuana use on adolescents is substantial and multifaceted. It impairs cognitive functions, increases the risk of mental health issues, and leads to addiction. Policymakers, educators, and parents must work together to raise awareness about these risks and implement strategies to prevent marijuana use among adolescents.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Cannabis and teens. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/factsheets/teens.htm>

Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. (2023). Recreational cannabis use among U.S. adolescents poses risk of adverse mental health and life outcomes. <https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/recreational-cannabis-use-adolescents-mental-health>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). Know the negative effects and risks of marijuana use. <https://www.samhsa.gov/marijuana>

Impact on Rehabilitation Services

Recreational cannabis use poses significant challenges to rehabilitation services, impacting both the demand and efficacy of these services. As the legalization of recreational cannabis spreads, it is essential to examine its potential negative effects on rehabilitation services.

Increased Demand for Rehabilitation Services

One of the primary impacts of recreational cannabis use is the increase in demand for rehabilitation services. Adolescents and adults who use cannabis recreationally are at a higher risk of developing cannabis use disorder (CUD). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2024) reported that approximately 3 in 10 people who use cannabis have CUD. As a result, rehabilitation centers are experiencing higher admission rates for cannabis-related disorders, straining their resources and capacity.

Challenges in Treatment Efficacy

Rehabilitation services face significant challenges in effectively treating CUD. The psychoactive component of cannabis, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can lead to dependency and withdrawal symptoms, complicating the rehabilitation process. According to the Substance Abuse

and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2024), withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, sleep disturbances, and cravings can hinder the effectiveness of traditional treatment methods. This necessitates the development of specialized treatment protocols tailored to cannabis users, further straining rehabilitation services.

Impact on Mental Health Services

Recreational cannabis use is linked to various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis. As the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry (2023) notes, adolescents who use cannabis are particularly susceptible to these mental health disorders. The dual diagnosis of substance use disorder and mental health issues requires comprehensive treatment plans and specialized care, increasing the burden on mental health professionals and rehabilitation services.

Resource Allocation and Financial Strain

The increased demand for rehabilitation services due to recreational cannabis use necessitates greater resource allocation and financial investment. Rehabilitation centers must expand their facilities, hire additional staff, and invest

Impact on Education Systems

in specialized training programs to address the unique needs of cannabis users. This financial strain can limit the availability of resources for other critical areas of rehabilitation, such as opioid addiction treatment, further exacerbating existing challenges within the rehabilitation system.

Conclusion

The negative impact of recreational cannabis use on rehabilitation services is multifaceted, encompassing increased demand, challenges in treatment efficacy, mental health complications, and resource allocation issues. Policymakers and healthcare providers must recognize these challenges and implement strategies to mitigate the adverse effects on rehabilitation services. This includes developing specialized treatment protocols for cannabis users, increasing funding for rehabilitation centers, and raising awareness about the risks associated with recreational cannabis use.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Cannabis and teens. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/factsheets/teens.htm>

Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. (2023). Recreational cannabis use among U.S. adolescents poses risk of adverse mental health and life outcomes. <https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/recreational-cannabis-use-adolescents-mental-health>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). Know the negative effects and risks of marijuana use. <https://www.samhsa.gov/marijuana>

Recreational cannabis use is increasingly becoming a topic of concern for education systems worldwide. While discussions often focus on its societal implications, the adverse effects on educational environments and student outcomes warrant urgent attention.

Impact on Student Performance

Cannabis use can significantly impair cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and learning abilities, which are crucial for academic success. According to the CDC (2024), adolescents who use cannabis are more likely to suffer from cognitive deficits that negatively impact their academic performance. These deficits can lead to lower grades, increased absenteeism, and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school.

Mental Health Challenges

Recreational cannabis use is linked to various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis. The Columbia University Department of Psychiatry (2023) notes that adolescents who use cannabis are particularly susceptible to these mental health disorders. The dual diagnosis of substance use disorder and mental health issues necessitates comprehensive treatment plans and specialized care, further straining the resources of school counselors and mental health professionals.

Resource Allocation and Financial Strain

The increased prevalence of cannabis use among students requires schools to allocate more resources to address its effects. This includes hiring additional counselors, implementing drug education programs, and conducting regular screenings for substance abuse. These measures entail significant financial investments, which can strain already tight school budgets. According to the SAMHSA (2024), schools may need to divert funds from other critical areas, such as academic programs and extracurricular activities, to address the rising issue of cannabis use.

Impact on School Environment

The presence of cannabis in schools can create a disruptive learning environment. Increased drug-related incidents can lead to a rise in disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, which can disrupt the educational process for all students. Furthermore, the normalization of cannabis use among peers can encourage more students to experiment with the drug, perpetuating a cycle of substance abuse and academic decline.

Conclusion

The negative impact of recreational cannabis use on education systems is multifaceted, encompassing impaired student performance, mental health challenges, resource allocation issues, and a disruptive school environment. Policymakers and educators must recognize these challenges and implement strategies to mitigate the adverse effects on students and schools. This includes developing targeted prevention programs, increasing funding for school-based mental health services, and raising awareness about the risks associated with cannabis use.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Cannabis and teens. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/factsheets/teens.htm>

Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. (2023). Recreational cannabis use among U.S. adolescents poses risk of adverse mental health and life outcomes. <https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/recreational-cannabis-use-adolescents-mental-health>

[columbiapsychiatry.org/news/recreational-cannabis-use-adolescents-mental-health](https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/recreational-cannabis-use-adolescents-mental-health)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). Know the negative effects and risks of marijuana use. <https://www.samhsa.gov/marijuana>

Impact of Recreational Marijuana on Communities

The legalization of recreational marijuana has been a contentious issue, with significant debate surrounding its impact on communities. While proponents argue that legalization can lead to economic benefits and reduce crime rates, evidence suggests that recreational marijuana use can have several negative effects on communities.

First, the legalization of recreational marijuana is associated with an increase in crime rates. Contrary to the claims that legalization reduces crime, studies have shown that it can lead to higher rates of certain types of crime. For instance, a report by the Cato Institute (2021) found that legalization spurs marijuana and other drug or alcohol use, which can contribute to an increase in crime rates. This increase in crime can strain local law enforcement resources and negatively impact community safety.

Second, recreational marijuana use can have detrimental effects on public health. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2023) points out that while there are some medicinal benefits of cannabis, the risks associated with its recreational use are notable. For instance, smoking marijuana can negatively affect your lungs, causing respiratory issues. It can also lead to mental health disorders, with some users experiencing increased anxiety or paranoia. Additionally, frequent use can impair cognitive function, making everyday tasks more challenging. These health problems can place a burden on healthcare systems and reduce the overall well-being of community members.

Furthermore, the legalization of recreational marijuana can exacerbate social inequalities. The Associated Press (2023) reports that the drug war has devastated African-American communities, and legal marijuana has not necessarily provided the expected social equity benefits. Instead, marginalized communities may continue to face disproportionate negative impacts, such as higher rates of substance abuse and limited access to the economic opportunities promised by legalization.

In conclusion, the negative impact of recreational marijuana on communities is multifaceted. It can lead to increased crime rates, public health issues, and exacerbation of social inequalities. Policymakers must carefully consider these potential drawbacks when debating the legalization of recreational marijuana and implement measures to mitigate its adverse effects on communities.

References:

Cato Institute. (2021). *The effect of state marijuana legalizations: 2021 update*. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/effect-state-marijuana-legalizations-2021-update>

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2023). *Risks and benefits of legalized cannabis*. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/risks-and-benefits-of-legalized-cannabis>

Morrison, A. (2023, April 20). *The drug war devastated Black communities. Is legal marijuana helping?* Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/drug-war-marijuana-black-communities-cannabis-equity-91322743b90b5bed6a8a1e93a20b80b8>





Impact on the Environment

The legalization of recreational marijuana has sparked considerable debate not only regarding its social and economic impacts but also its environmental consequences. While proponents of legalization highlight potential economic benefits and societal shifts, the environmental ramifications of cultivating and distributing marijuana are often overlooked. Evidence indicates that the legal cultivation of marijuana can have several detrimental effects on the environment.

First, marijuana cultivation requires substantial water resources, which can exacerbate water scarcity issues. According to Bauer et al. (2015), marijuana plants are among the most water-intensive crops, requiring up to six gallons of water per plant, per day in certain regions. This high demand can strain local water supplies, especially in drought-prone areas, and negatively impact other agricultural activities. Furthermore, the diversion of water for marijuana cultivation can lead to the depletion of streams and rivers, adversely affecting aquatic ecosystems.

Second, the cultivation of marijuana often involves the use of pesticides and fertilizers, which can lead to soil and water contamination. Gainey et al. (2020) reported that these chemicals can leach into the soil and groundwater, posing risks to both human health and wildlife. Pesticides used in marijuana cultivation can harm beneficial insects and pollinators, such as bees, which are crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health. Additionally, fertilizer runoff can contribute to nutrient pollution in water bodies, leading to problems like algal blooms and hypoxic zones that diminish water quality and aquatic life.

Additionally, indoor marijuana cultivation can have significant energy consumption and carbon emissions. Mills (2012) highlights that indoor growing operations rely heavily on artificial lighting, heating, and ventilation systems, which consume large amounts of electricity. This high energy demand can contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions, particularly if the electricity is sourced from fossil fuels. The carbon footprint of indoor marijuana cultivation can thus undermine efforts to combat climate change and achieve sustainability goals.

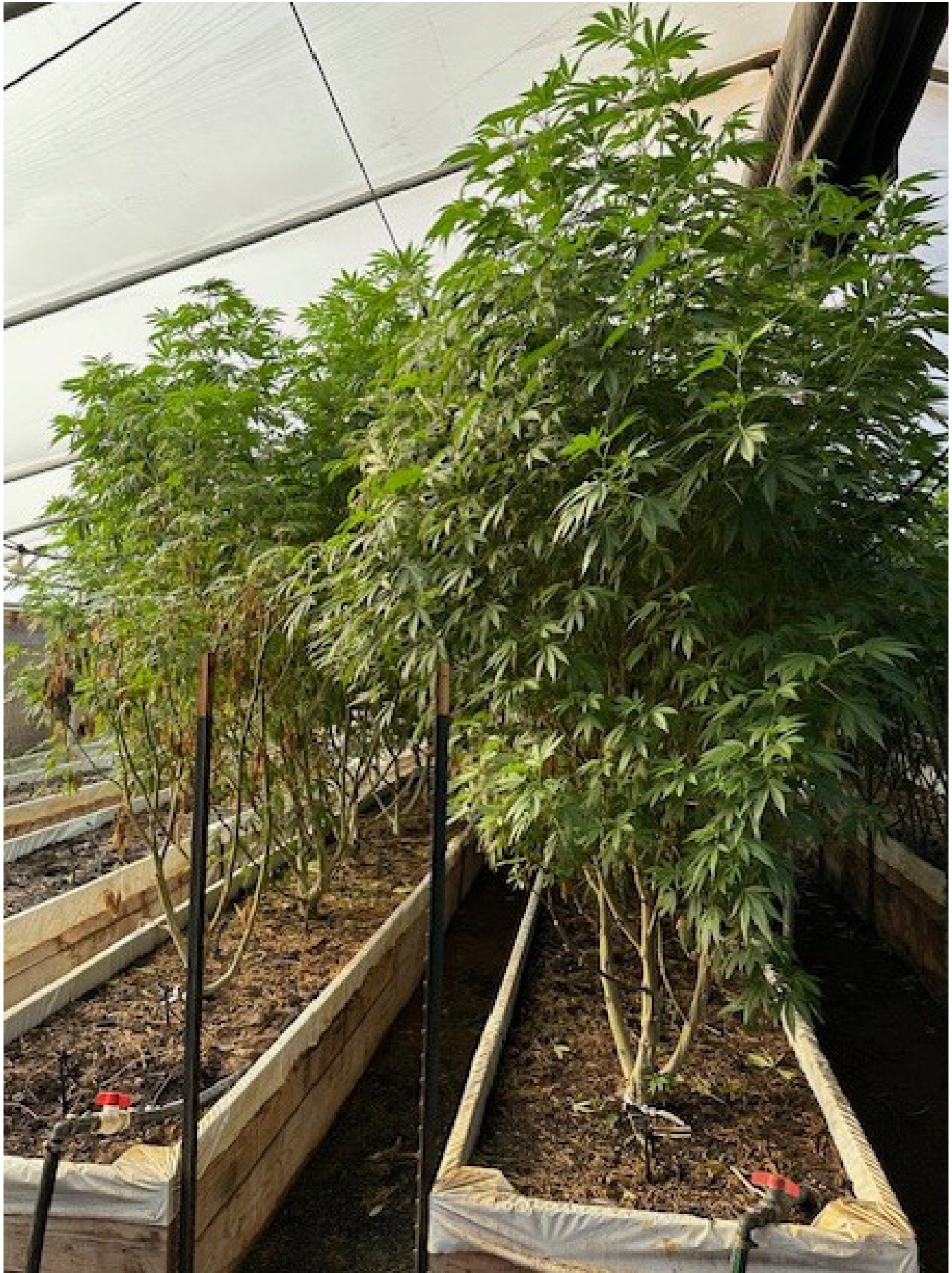
Moreover, the expansion of marijuana cultivation can lead to habitat destruction and deforestation. Wartenberg et al. (2018) observed that in regions where outdoor cultivation is prevalent, forests and natural habitats are often cleared to make way for marijuana farms. This deforestation can result in the loss of biodiversity, disruption of wildlife

corridors, and increased soil erosion. The encroachment into natural habitats also heightens the risk of human-wildlife conflicts and the spread of invasive species.

In conclusion, recreational marijuana legalization has a multifaceted environmental impact that includes water resource depletion, soil and water contamination, high energy consumption, and habitat destruction. Policymakers and stakeholders must consider these environmental costs when discussing recreational marijuana legalization and implement measures to mitigate its adverse effects. Sustainable cultivation practices, such as water-efficient irrigation systems, organic farming methods, renewable energy sources, and habitat conservation efforts, should be prioritized to minimize the environmental footprint of marijuana production.

References:

- Bauer, S., Olson, J., Cockrill, A., van Hattem, M., Miller, L., & Tauzer, M. (2015). Impacts of surface water diversions for marijuana cultivation on aquatic habitat in four Northwestern California watersheds. *PLOS ONE*, 10(3), e0120016. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0120016>
- Gainey, L., Lenardis, A., & Viarengo, A. (2020). Pesticide contamination in water and soil: Perspectives on human and environmental health. *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*, 39(4), 726–741. <https://doi.org/10.1002/etc.4718>
- Mills, E. (2012). The carbon footprint of indoor cannabis production. *Energy Policy*, 46, 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2012.03.023>
- Wartenberg, A. C., Mooney, L., Redmond, A., & Feser, E. A. (2018). The impacts of outdoor cannabis cultivation on forest habitat in Northern California. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 16(8), 449–455. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.1827>





Recommendations to Improve Access to Medical Cannabis

The increasing recognition of medical cannabis therapeutic benefits necessitates a focused approach to improving access while balancing public health perspectives and social equity. This opinion piece explores evidence-based recommendations to enhance accessibility to medical cannabis.

Public Health Perspectives

From a public health standpoint, ensuring the safe and effective use of medical cannabis involves rigorous regulatory standards. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017) emphasizes the importance of developing standardized dosing guidelines and quality control measures. Such standards can mitigate risks associated with inconsistent product potency and contamination, thus safeguarding patient health. Additionally, integrating medical cannabis into mainstream healthcare systems allows for better monitoring and management of patient outcomes. This can be achieved by training healthcare professionals to make informed recommendations and monitor the efficacy and safety of cannabis treatments (Whiting et al., 2015). Jurisdictions that have legalized recreational cannabis have seen a reduction in registered medical marijuana patients. This would indicate that individuals who previously required a doctor's care to determine their rate of utilization for medical relief are now self-medicating without medical oversight.

Social Equity Considerations

Improving access to medical cannabis must also address historical injustices and ensure equitable resource distribution. Policies should prioritize communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs. According to Williams and Arrington (2020), implementing social equity programs that provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to minority-owned businesses can foster inclusivity in the cannabis industry. Furthermore, expunging criminal records for past nonviolent cannabis offenses can remove barriers to employment and economic participation (Drug Policy Alliance, 2020).

Best Practices

Combining best practices from existing models is essential to effectively improving access. States like Illinois and Massachusetts have pioneered social equity initiatives in their cannabis programs, offering valuable lessons. For instance, the Illinois Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program allocates a portion of cannabis tax revenue to communities impacted by drug-related incarcerations (Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, 2022). Such models can be replicated and adapted to other jurisdictions to ensure fair resource allocation.

Additionally, patient access can be enhanced by streamlining the medical cannabis approval process. Simplifying application procedures and reducing costs associated with obtaining medical cannabis cards can alleviate financial and administrative burdens on patients (Pacula et al., 2016). Furthermore, expanding insurance coverage for medical cannabis can make treatments more affordable and accessible to a broader patient population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, improving access to medical cannabis requires a multifaceted approach that integrates public health safeguards, promotes social equity, and adopts best practices from successful models. Policymakers must develop comprehensive strategies that ensure safe, equitable, and effective access to medical cannabis, thus maximizing its therapeutic potential for diverse patient populations.

References:

- Drug Policy Alliance. (2020). *Expungement now: Repairing the harms of cannabis prohibition*. <https://drugpolicy.org/resource/expungement-now-repairing-harms-cannabis-prohibition>
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. (2022). *Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program*. <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/R3Program.aspx>
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: The current state of evidence and recommendations for research*. National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/24625>
- Pacula, R. L., Boustead, A. E., & Hunt, P. (2014). *Words can be deceiving: A review of variation among legally effective medical marijuana laws in the United States*. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 143, 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2014.07.034>
- Whiting, P. F., Wolff, R. F., Deshpande, S., Di Nisio, M., Duffy, S., Hernandez, A. V., ... & Kleijnen, J. (2015). *Cannabinoids for medical use: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *JAMA*, 313(24), 2456–2473. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.6358>
- Williams, A. R., & Arrington, E. (2020). *Social equity in medical cannabis licensing: Addressing disparities in the cannabis industry*. *Journal of Cannabis Research*, 2(1), Article 47. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42238-020-00047-3>

Summary of Impact of the Commercialization of Recreational Cannabis

To assess the impact of recreational cannabis, we must determine if the income generated through taxation and regulation will benefit or hurt the community in the long run. Here is a summary of the potential benefits and drawbacks of legalizing recreational cannabis.

Economic Impact

One of the primary benefits of legalizing recreational cannabis is the potential economic boost it can provide. According to the Cato Institute (2021) states that have legalized marijuana have seen substantial increases in tax revenues. These funds can be allocated to public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Additionally, legalization creates job opportunities in the cultivation, distribution, and retail sectors, further stimulating economic growth.

However, once the enforcement, regulation, prevention, and treatment associated with the direct increase in cannabis utilization and industry control are considered, the actual net revenue is greatly reduced. Indirect costs are impossible to calculate accurately; however, secondary impacts, such as increases in driving while impaired, need to be acknowledged.

Black Market Impact

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2023) highlights that regulated cannabis markets can reduce the prevalence of black market activity, leading to safer, controlled distribution of the product. Furthermore, legal access can facilitate better research into cannabis medicinal properties, potentially offering new treatment avenues for various conditions.

Unfortunately, control or reduction of the black market has not occurred in any jurisdiction in the United States, and in many cases, the black market is equivalent to or larger than the legal market. This has led to legal businesses having to close their doors due to the monthly losses associated with the illegal competition. Furthermore, the hope of safer cannabis has not been realized in many jurisdictions as many government agencies fail to truly regulate the quality of the products being sold.

Environmental Impact

Despite some perceived advantages, the environmental costs are significant. The cultivation of marijuana is resource-intensive, particularly in terms of water usage. Bauer et al. (2015) reports that marijuana plants require up to six gallons of water per plant per day, which can strain local water supplies. Additionally, the use of pesticides and fertilizers in cultivation can lead to soil and water contamination (Gainey, Lenardis, & Viarengo, 2020). Indoor cultivation exacerbates environmental costs due to high energy consumption, contributing to increased carbon emissions (Mills, 2012).

Social Costs

The social costs include potential public health risks and societal impacts. The Associated Press (Morrison, 2023), notes that while legalization aims to remedy the damage caused by the drug war, it may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities if not carefully regulated. Furthermore, there are concerns about increased recreational use leading to higher rates of addiction. This is particularly concerning as youth and young adults are at increased risk of developing long-term complications from utilization while their brains are still developing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the legalization of recreational cannabis presents a complex interplay of costs and benefits. While the economic and social advantages are thought to be substantial by supporters of recreational cannabis, the environmental and social costs cannot be ignored. Policymakers must weigh these factors carefully.

References:

- Bauer, S., Olson, J., Cockrill, A., Van Hatter, M., Miller, L., & Tauzer, M. (2015). Impacts of surface water diversions for marijuana cultivation on aquatic habitat in four Northwestern California watersheds. *PLOS ONE*, 10(3), e0120016. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0120016>
- Cato Institute. (2021). The effect of state marijuana legalizations: 2021 update. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/effect-state-marijuana-legalizations-2021-update>
- Gainey, L., Lenardis, A., & Viarengo, A. (2020). Pesticide contamination in water and soil: Perspectives on human and environmental health. *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*, 39(4), 726–741. <https://doi.org/10.1002/etc.4718>
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2023). Risks and benefits of legalized cannabis. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/risks-and-benefits-of-legalized-cannabis>
- Mills, E. (2012). The carbon footprint of indoor cannabis production. *Energy Policy*, 46, 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2012.03.023>
- Morrison, A. (2023, April 20). The drug war devastated Black communities. Is legal marijuana helping? Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/drug-war-marijuana-black-communities-cannabis-equity-91322743b90b5bed6a8a1e93a20b80b8>

