

Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association

3905 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 • Tel: (717) 236-1059 • Fax: (717) 236-0226 • Web Site: <http://www.pachiefs.org>

Good morning Chairman Ward, co-chair and senate committee members. Thank you for the invitation to address the committee. I believe the citizens of Pennsylvania are entitled to the facts and deserve much better than what was presented at the hearings on marijuana legalization by the PA Senate Law and Justice Committee. Those hearings presented a one-sided agenda that denied important health and safety professionals from testifying while the table was set for the marijuana industry to testify despite their clear conflict of interest in standing to profit from more Pennsylvanians using marijuana for recreational use.

In the first hearing focused on law enforcement. Security officers hired by marijuana companies testified while the PA Fraternal Order of Police and PA Chiefs of Police Association, the Attorney General's office the Pennsylvania State Police, the Mid-Atlantic HIDTA, the DEA, to name a few, were not invited nor written testimony accepted.

During the "hearings" some troubling statements were made:

90,000 Pennsylvanians arrested for marijuana in the last five years – "As soon as you are arrested you have that lifelong criminal record that carries on forever that bars you from employment, housing and education." Prohibition is "a massive front door to the criminal justice system." I believe the judge can address this.

"Not once in my 21-year career have I seen someone high on weed that has beat up their spouse...Violence just isn't there."

Marijuana industry: Oppose potency cap limits, oppose local community opt-outs, encouraged the Senate and House to move as fast as possible. Ask yourselves why.

All the continuing and changing rationalizations and explanations, the purposeful untruths that have been or are easily refuted. Why?

I recently read an op-ed by a member of the Senate who stated that 90% of Pennsylvanians support legalization of marijuana. I believe that this simply shows the marijuana industry is in the driver's seat. Ask yourselves why? Regardless of your opinion this is a misinformation vs the objective facts.

One of the troubling facts for a law enforcement as it relates to our adult populace and teens is impaired driving. Alcohol is unique among impairing drugs in that there is a documented correlation between blood alcohol levels and levels of impairment. This does not exist for other drugs and it has been shown to be non-existent for THC in marijuana. In populous areas of our Commonwealth, this is particularly concerning where the risk of catastrophic consequences related to a drug impaired driving incident is exponentially more probable.

The percentages of traffic deaths related to the use of recreational marijuana doubled in Washington State in the year retail marijuana sales were permitted. In Colorado, marijuana is now involved in more than one of every five deaths on the road.

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Traffic Deaths Related to Marijuana Where an OPERATOR Tested Positive for Marijuana			
Crash Year	Total Statewide Fatalities	Fatalities with <u>Operators</u> Testing Positive for Marijuana	Percentage Total Fatalities
2013	481	71	14.8%
2014	488	94	19.3%
2015	547	115	21.0%
2016	608	149	24.5%
2017	648	162	25.0%
2018	632	144	23.0%
2019	596	149	25.0%
2020	622	151	24.3%

- Of the 151 marijuana-related traffic deaths:
 - 104 were drivers
 - 22 were pedestrians
 - 21 were passengers
 - 4 were bicyclists

SOURCE: CDOT 2013-2020

NOTE: In 2020, 51% of operators' blood was tested after being involved in a fatal crash.

As it pertains to youth, the State of Colorado is a great resource for data. They have produced reports since recreational marijuana was legalized in 2013. Their recent report **THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA IN COLORADO: THE IMPACT** (September 2021) published by the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area noted the following;

- Past month marijuana use for ages 12 and older increased 26% and is 61% higher than the national average, currently ranked 3rd in the nation.
- Past month youth marijuana (ages 12-17) is 39% higher than the national average, currently ranked 7th in the nation

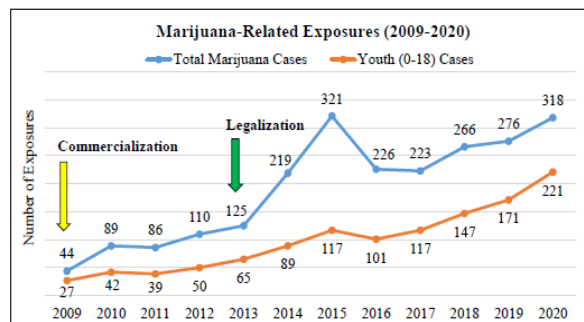
We have strongly suggested that there is insufficient data to determine the true impact of legalized marijuana on crime and safety. However, studies in Colorado show:

- High-potency THC from marijuana hash oil extractions, which are used in making legalized laced edibles and beverages, has led to overdoses, potential psychotic breaks, and suicide attempts.
- Youth use and addiction rates have increased due to ease of accessibility, and there is great concern about the significant health impacts of chronic marijuana use by youths.

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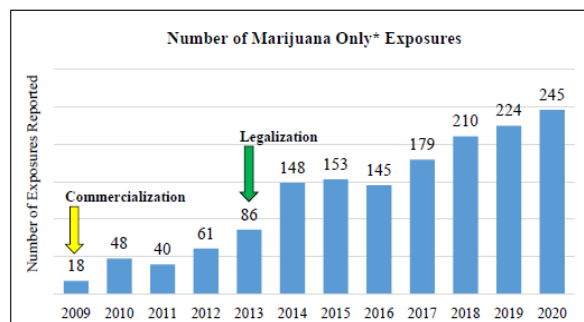
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Poison Control/Marijuana Exposure Data



SOURCE: Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center

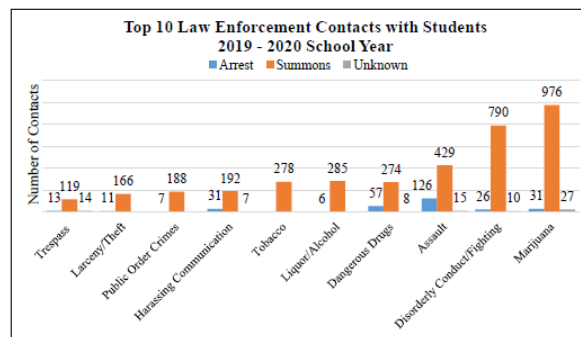
NOTE: Total marijuana-related exposure cases include unknown ages.



SOURCE: Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center

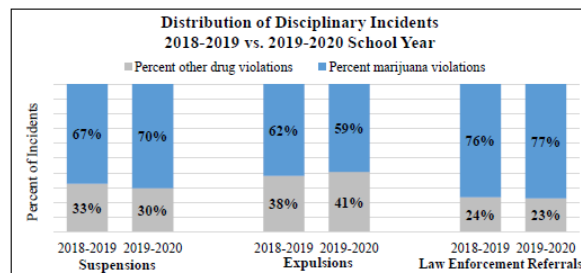
***NOTE:** Marijuana was the only substance referenced in the call to the poison and drug center.

Marijuana in Schools



SOURCE: Colorado Division of Criminal Justice

NOTE: The number of contacts from the 2019 to 2020 school year may not represent a complete school year due to the beginning of lockdowns associated with COVID-19 in March 2020.



SOURCE: Colorado Department of Education

NOTE: Law Enforcement Referrals may or may not have been in addition to another reported action taken (suspension, expulsion, or other).

All states continue efforts to reduce adolescent marijuana use. Longitudinal research has shown, youth attitudes about the risks associated with substance use are often closely related to their use, with an inverse association between use and risk perceptions (i.e., the prevalence of use is lower among those who perceive considerable risk of harm from use). Thus, states with a high prevalence of adolescent marijuana use would be expected to have a low prevalence of adolescent perception that there is a great health risk from using marijuana. There is certainly a probability that the perception that legalization equates to safety. The available data would suggest otherwise.

Let me close by strongly suggesting that the Commonwealth need answers that are supported by valid data and scientific research. The public's safety and welfare are the first priority for our elected officials and law enforcement. Law enforcement leaders are committed to ensuring our communities are safe.

Scott L. Bohn, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association