



DENVER
PUBLIC
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Substance Use Prevention Program
Empowering Healthy Choices

March 16, 2021

Councilwoman Black, Chair
Finance and Governance Committee
1437 Bannock St, Rm 451

Councilwoman Kniech, Vice Chair
Finance and Governance Committee
1437 Bannock St, Rm 451

To Ms. Black, Ms. Kniech, and Members of the Denver Finance and Governance Committee,

A collective of Denver Public Schools Principals are concerned that marijuana hospitality establishments could inadvertently cause an increase in marijuana access and use among our youth and young adults. Substantial evidence shows that youth marijuana use can be detrimental to a young person's development, both socially and physically¹. Increasing the number of marijuana businesses in Denver will expand availability and increase youth's exposure to marijuana. Research shows that these two factors (increased availability and exposure) impact youth perceptions of risk associated with using marijuana, making it seem less risky².

The 2017, Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) estimated that 19.4% of Colorado high school students and 5.2% of middle school students reported using marijuana in the past 30 days. While 30-day marijuana use has remained stable among Colorado's middle and high school students, (4.4% in 2011 for middle school and 21.2 percent in 2005 for high school students³) these rates are some of the highest in the United States⁴.

Research shows that regulating the number of businesses in a given area that can sell age restricted products (marijuana, tobacco and alcohol) is part of an effective strategy to prevent youth misuse. The location, density, and type of marijuana retailers in a community affect youth misuse rates and contribute to structural health inequities.

- Marijuana dispensary density has been linked to increased youth use —with 16% of 11th graders reporting marijuana use in areas with less dispensary density

¹ Scientific Literature Review on Potential Health Effects of Marijuana Use: Marijuana Use Among Adolescents and Young Adults. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee.

² Fiala SC, Dilley JA, Firth CL, Maher JE. Exposure to Marijuana Marketing After Legalization of Retail Sales: Oregonians' Experiences, 2015–2016. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2018;108(1):120-127. doi:10.2105/ajph.2017.304136.

³ Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2018. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

⁴ Hughes, A., Lipari, R.N., & Williams, M. The CBHSQ Report: State Estimates of Adolescent Marijuana Use and Perceptions of Risk of Harm From Marijuana Use: 2013 and 2014. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality.



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compared to 24.3% of the same age group reporting use in more retail-dense areas⁵.

- A recent study indicates that higher marijuana dispensary density in states with legal cannabis laws was associated with a higher likelihood of youth ages 14-18 experimenting with cannabis vaping and edibles⁶.

Regulating the density of age-restricted businesses can significantly impact public health in a positive way. To protect our youth and young people in Denver Public Schools, it is critically important that the City does not allow an over saturation of marijuana businesses in Denver's neighborhoods. The City should not remove the cap on marijuana cultivation and store locations.

Additionally, we are encouraged by the proximity provisions currently in the Denver marijuana hospitality draft ordinance, keeping new marijuana businesses 1,000 feet away from schools and other youth serving facilities, as well as 1,000 feet away from other marijuana businesses. These proximity regulations are needed, necessary, and important for protecting our Denver Public Schools students, and other Denver youth. Removing these proximity requirements would expand availability and increase youth's exposure to marijuana. Please maintain the proximity requirements from youth serving organizations and other marijuana businesses.

Thank you for keeping the protection of our young people front of mind as you make these important policy considerations. We appreciate your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely,

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DocuSigned by: Andrew A2F4C56397294E9...

DocuSigned by: Bobby Thomas 595BFF09615542E...

DocuSigned by: Scott Wolf 9B889F0B3A10427...

⁵ Hatch, A. (2017, April 14). Researchers tracking public health impacts of marijuana legalization. Washington State University. https://nursing.wsu.edu/2017/04/14/13255v

⁶ Borodovsky JT, Lee DC, Crosier BS, Gabrielli JL, Sargent JD, Budney AJ. (2017). U.S. cannabis legalization and use of vaping and edible products among youth. Drug Alcohol Depend. 0(0). doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2017.02.017.