



August 28, 2024

Doctors for Drug Policy Reform
712 H Street NE, Suite 1290
Washington, DC 20002

Colorado Springs City Council
107 N. Nevada Ave. #300
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Colorado Springs Planning Commission:

I am writing today to address the Colorado Springs City Council's proposed ban on recreational marijuana. I am president of *Doctors for Drug Policy Reform* (D4DPR), an international group of several hundred physicians and other medical professionals who support Colorado's regulation of cannabis. Prior to moving to Colorado in 2018 upon retirement from full-time academia, I was the Distinguished Professor of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and a former Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) addiction specialist of 30 years. I have published and spoken widely on the biological effects and treatment of addictive disorders and I am the Editor-in-Chief of *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*. I am also a Clinical Professor at CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

I am truly puzzled by the Council's proposed ban on the sale of cannabis for adult use. As you know, the possession of cannabis is legal in the state of Colorado. The majority of people in the state have local access to a legal dispensary, where regulated products are sold. Individuals who don't have legal local access—as is the case in Colorado Springs—either buy it in another city's dispensary or obtain it illegally through the black market. Unfortunately, illegally bought cannabis is unregulated and therefore does not meet safety standards; there is no labeling of potency or ingredients; there are no warnings; and minors are not protected.

At the City Council meeting two weeks ago, some members of City Council and individuals presented a litany of potential dangers of cannabis based upon what I found to be a very narrow and biased read of the literature. Although I feel these perceived dangers further argue for the regulated sale of cannabis, I will briefly address some of their points:

- A robust clinical literature has clearly demonstrated that cannabis is *not* a gateway drug. Tobacco and alcohol, maybe. But not cannabis. It most certainly does not lead to opioid use (<https://www.d4dpr.org/education/is-cannabis-a-gateway-drug>).
- Our brains are constantly evolving and everything we do leads to changes in the brain. However, it has *never* been demonstrated that cannabis leads to long-term changes in the brain that are associated with altered behaviors. While cannabis has been associated with

various mental health disorders—particularly psychosis—it remains highly uncertain whether cannabis is the *cause* of these disorders. Regardless, it is generally recommended that individuals with psychosis not use cannabis – this warning is best provided in a regulated system focused on education and prevention.

- The misuse of alcohol contributes to suicide, anxiety, depression, and psychological and physical trauma, as well as multiple cancers, motor vehicle fatalities, cirrhotic liver disease, dementia, and death. To suggest that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol is incorrect.

As someone who grew up in the 1960s, the arguments against cannabis have changed slightly, but the non-scientific scare tactics have persisted.

I urge you to consider the facts and vote “no” on the proposed ban to recreational marijuana.

Sincerely,



Bryon Adinoff, MD

President, Doctors for Drug Policy Reform

(817) 371-9798 (m) | D4DPR.org | adinoff@d4dpr.org

712 H Street NE, Suite 1290, Washington, DC 20002

