

## Michigan Sample Op Ed

On November 4, 2008, Michigan voters will have the opportunity to vote on the [“Michigan Medical Marihauna Act”](#) on their election ballots. They should vote no. The initiative would remove all criminal and civil penalties and effectively legalize 2.5 ounces of “medical” marijuana, or 12 marijuana plants per “patient” and “caregiver.” Ballot initiatives such as this ignore the prevention efforts of the many community anti-drug coalitions throughout the state and give the false impression that marijuana is a benign drug.

Efforts to promote the myth of “medical” marijuana severely dilute the message that marijuana is dangerous and can have serious consequences. Marijuana is the most widely abused illicit drug in America. In fact, according to the 2005 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set, approximately 65.1% of youth treatment cases were for marijuana use.

Proponents would have you believe that legalizing marijuana effectively reduces the number of individuals who use marijuana. To the contrary, this is false. Since 1996, twelve states have passed medical marijuana laws. According to the State Estimates of Substance Use from the 2005-2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, eight of the 10 states with the highest percentage of past month marijuana users, and five of the top 10 states with the highest rates of new youth initiates (ages 12-17) are states that have passed initiatives. Clearly, using the states in which medical marijuana is now permissible as an example, legalization does not reduce drug abuse.

Further, proponents often cite the 1999 Institute of Medicine Report to validate their claim that marijuana has medicinal uses. However, the IOM report also states that in spite of any medicinal value that marijuana may have, “because of the health risks associated with smoking, smoking marijuana should generally not be recommended for long-term medicinal use . . . we see little future in smoked marijuana as a medicine.”

Legalizing the use of medicinal marijuana ignores prevention and public safety issues and will have a deleterious effect on youth and communities throughout the state. Vote no to the Michigan Medical Marijuana Initiative.

