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State Medical Societies Demand Legislators Say “NO” to Recreational Marijuana Legalization

Group comprises Seven State Medical Associations with more than 180,000 physician and student members

Wilmington, DE - June 4, 2019 - With pressure mounting on state legislatures across the country to legalize recreational marijuana, a coalition of seven state Medical Societies is calling for thoughtful and thorough consideration before rushing to legislate.

“Public health should be our number one concern here, not commercializing a drug for state tax dollars,” said Andrew W. Dahlke, MD, President of the Medical Society of Delaware. “It is unconscionable to put money over the medical well-being of our citizens, the priority must be health first!”

Indeed, [data from states that have legalized recreational marijuana shows an increase in car accidents](#) and an increase in teen use.

The American Medical Association (AMA) stands with the state coalition in expressing concern about legalization of cannabis for recreational use. James Madara, MD, executive vice president and CEO of the AMA recently sent a letter to New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins urging her to “delay initiating the legalization of cannabis for recreational (non-medicinal) use until further research is completed on the public health, medical, economic and social consequences of its use.”

The coalition is urging Congress to re-classify marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule II so that necessary research can be performed to better inform states considering these proposals. As a Schedule II drug, government funding can be sought for necessary research that clearly defines the positive and negative elements of marijuana use.

“One of our chief concerns is the lack of sufficient research and clinical study upon which legislators and voters are approaching this issue,” said Connecticut State Medical Society President Claudia Gruss, MD. “A major contributing factor is that marijuana continues to have a schedule I classification by the federal government, which significantly limits the comprehensive research that can be performed to inform physician and consumer decision-making.”

A final concern involves the worsening of the current mental health and substance abuse crisis enveloping the country.

“The efforts for legalization of recreational marijuana appears to be driven by the base element of profit. As a result, tremendous financial resources are being directed at efforts for legalization in the states. Large corporations are researching the feasibility of bringing cannabis infused food and drink products to market! It's extremely problematic when profit takes priority over health concerns. Delaware needs to look out for its most vulnerable citizens,” said Richard W. Henderson, MD, Chair of the Medical Society of Delaware’s Government Affairs Committee. “The focus should be preventing these vulnerable populations from falling victim to substance abuse disorders and other long term health related issues.”

The coalition of State Medical Societies consists of the Medical Society of the State of New York, the Connecticut State Medical Society, the Medical Society of New Jersey, the Medical Society of Delaware, the New Hampshire Medical Society, the Massachusetts Medical Society, and the Ohio State Medical Association.

About the Medical Society of Delaware

The Medical Society of Delaware is one of the oldest institutions of its kind in the United States and rich in history. Founded in 1776 and incorporated on February 3, 1789, The Medical Society of Delaware continues its support of physicians in their vigor and spirit to advance the profession, which was the basis for its creation. Its Mission is “To guide, serve and support Delaware Physicians, promoting the practice and profession of medicine to enhance the health of our communities.”

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