

focus

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MICHIGAN
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PROPOSAL 1 SAY NO TO RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA

Catholics are called to engage in the world, to work towards a society where all can “experience the love of God and live out that love.”¹ This call extends to the home, workplace, community and even in the political process. On Tuesday, November 6, Michigan Catholics will have the opportunity to engage in the world by participating in the General Election. As is with elections, ballots will include local, state, and federal candidates, as well as local and statewide issue proposals. In order to best promote justice, peace and human dignity, Catholics should prayerfully reflect upon Scripture and the social teachings of the Church before casting their votes.

As the 2018 General Election draws closer, the Catholic Church in Michigan seeks to provide information and guidance, particularly on policy questions that will appear on the statewide ballot. One measure, Proposal 1, asks Michigan voters if recreational marijuana should be legal. Questions about this proposal considered by the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC) Board of Directors, which includes the Diocesan Bishops of the state, asked if this measure promotes the common good and if it uplifts the moral fiber in the state. After careful review, the MCC Board is urging a No vote on the measure, citing the harm it may cause for Michigan families, health outcomes, communities and workers. The purpose for this **focus** publication is to help Catholics

better understand the marijuana legalization proposal and to consider questions about its impact on the common good in society.

In addition to Proposal 1, two other proposals will appear on the statewide ballot: Proposal 2 would reform the state’s redistricting process while Proposal 3 would change state laws that dictate how voters participate in elections. The MCC Board of Directors has not adopted a position on either Proposal 2 or 3, as they are best left to the prudential judgement of individual voters. Additional information about the 2018 General Election can be found at micatholic.org/Election2018. ■

DID YOU KNOW?

Marijuana affects specific receptors in the brain—areas associated with learning, memory, coordination, and pleasure—which is why it can lead to an impaired sense of reality, a diminished ability to reason or recall information, and poor balance. Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the ingredient responsible for most of the drug’s psychological effects, or the feeling of “being high.”

PROPOSAL 1 RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

What would this proposal do? Proposal 1 would allow individuals twenty-one and older to use and possess recreational marijuana. Individuals could possess up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana on their person, keep up to 10 ounces at home, and grow up to twelve total plants in a single residence—the highest limits in the country. The new law also would provide rules for its commercial production and distribution, and it would place a ten percent excise tax on marijuana at the retail level. Any resulting revenue would be first allocated towards implementation costs and FDA-approved research on the benefits of medical marijuana for veterans (\$40 million). Additional revenue would then be distributed towards K–12 public education (35 percent); the repair and maintenance of roads and bridges (35 percent); and municipalities and counties where a marijuana business is located (15 percent each).

How many states have legalized marijuana? Nine states—Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Washington—and Washington D.C. have legalized *recreational* marijuana. Approximately thirty

states have legalized *medical* marijuana, including Michigan. Michigan’s law was adopted by voters in 2008 and is not impacted by this proposal.

Are there any limits to marijuana use? Under the measure, it would be illegal to drive under the influence of marijuana or to use marijuana on the street, sidewalk or in public parks. Municipalities could pass bans or limits on marijuana establishments within their boundaries.



SUPPORTERS

The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol, Michigan Cannabis Coalition, and MILEgalize (ballot question committees); the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan; Cannabis Counsel; Governor Candidates Bill Gelineau (L) and Gretchen Whitmer (D); Marijuana Law Section of the Michigan Bar; Michigan National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML); and the National Patient Rights Association Michigan Chapter.

OPPONENTS

The Committee to Keep Pot Out of Neighborhoods & Schools and Healthy & Productive Michigan (ballot question committees); Arbor Circle; Citizens for Traditional Values; Governor Candidate Bill Schuette (R), Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police; Michigan Association of Treatment Court Professionals; **Michigan Catholic Conference**; Michigan Chamber of Commerce; Michigan Farm Bureau; Michigan Prevention Association; Michigan Sheriffs’ Association; and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan.

HOW DOES CATHOLIC TEACHING APPLY TO PROPOSAL 1?

God has equipped each person with free will and the ability to reason, which assists in daily decision-making. With the temptation to allow passion and immediate physical pleasure to dictate one’s actions, temperance is critical. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), temperance

helps “[moderate] the attraction of pleasures,” keeping desires within safe and healthy boundaries. It also helps individuals avoid excess or abuse of all kinds that can lead to dependency and self-destruction (CCC 1809, 2290). The life of a Catholic is not only about avoiding evil and sin, but also pursuing the good: truth, holiness, friendship, justice, beauty and charity. Recreational marijuana use hinders this pursuit, intentionally altering one’s reality for non-medical purposes and limiting his or her decision-making ability. ■

QUESTIONS FOR CATHOLICS ABOUT LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

Provided here for reflection are responses to important questions Catholics may ask themselves about the legalization of marijuana in Michigan. As with other policy proposals, people of faith may consider: How will this affect families and communities; will this have a positive or negative result on the overall health of fellow citizens; and, how will this impact work, safety and economic life?

WILL THIS POLICY

PROTECT YOUTH OR IMPROVE FAMILY LIFE?

Parents have the responsibility to impart moral values; to teach children to honor God; and to help children develop emotionally, physically, and spiritually (CCC 2207). Legalizing recreational marijuana, however, teaches harmful lessons: that altering reality with a drug is desirable over hard work, that feelings and responsibilities should be numbed rather than dealt with, and that seeking happiness from an object is sustainable. Are these lessons worth teaching to the next generation?



CLAIM

- ▼ Increased legal use of recreational marijuana will not increase teen use.

RESPONSE

- ▲ Many states with recreational legalization have the highest teen usage rates.²
- ▲ Youth decreasingly believe that marijuana is harmful,³ when marijuana has a greater negative impact on youth than adults.⁴
- ▲ Many marijuana products/packaging target youth by mimicking popular candies (i.e. gummy bears).

Marijuana can also contribute to the breakdown of the family. There is substantial evidence that when marijuana use begins before adulthood, drug dependence surfaces more quickly.⁵ As these individuals become parents, dependence issues can produce chaotic and stress-filled homes, which harms child well-being and models behavior that continues the cycle of abuse.⁶ Many children have been introduced to the foster care system because they were harmfully exposed to marijuana during pregnancy or childhood, or because they were exposed to dangerous living conditions while their parents were growing marijuana. During pregnancy, emerging evidence suggests “an association between marijuana and fetal growth restriction, stillbirth, and preterm birth.”⁷ The political community has the duty “[to protect] the security and health of the family, especially with respect to dangers like drugs” (CCC 2211). Legalization, however, signals that the drug is safe, without regard for those families it leaves behind.

1. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB, 2015: <https://bit.ly/1kHJsse>

2. Arthur Hughes, MS, Rachel N. Lipari, PhD, and Matthew Williams, PhD, *The CBHSQ Report: State Estimates of Adolescent Marijuana Use and Perceptions of Risk of Harm From Marijuana Use: 2013 and 2014*, SAMHSA, 12/17/15: <https://bit.ly/2wVozVm>

3. “Marijuana Legalization in Colorado: Early Findings,” Colorado Department of Public Safety, March 2016, <https://bit.ly/1Vecjap>

4. “Marijuana Users Have Abnormal Brain Structure and Poor Memory,” *Northwestern Now*, 12/16/13: <https://bit.ly/2C61S1n>

5. Chuan-Yu Chen, PhD, Carla L. Storr, ScD, and James C. Anthony, PhD, “Early-Onset Drug Use and Risk for Drug Dependence Problems,” March 2009, <https://bit.ly/2QeUDfI>

6. “Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, updated July 2018: <https://bit.ly/2MdbHJB>

7. “Marijuana and Child Abuse and Neglect,” Colorado School of Public Health, November 2016: <https://bit.ly/2MbMs0m>

WILL THIS POLICY IMPROVE HEALTH?

Each human person has been formed with special care, reflecting the image and likeness of God. Recreational marijuana use, however, deliberately deprives individuals of their use of reason, which hinders their ability to live the life that has God envisioned. *The Catechism* states “the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense” (CCC, 2291). Research shows the negative impact of recreational marijuana use on health outcomes. Regular marijuana use has been connected to respiratory problems; mental health issues (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, suicidal thoughts, and social anxiety disorder); and learning, memory and attention loss.⁸ Additionally, marijuana-related hospitalizations, emergency room visits and poison control calls—including for those under age eight—have increased in Colorado since legalization.³

CLAIM

- ▼ Marijuana is not a gateway drug, and legalization reduces exposure to other drugs.

RESPONSE

- ▲ Marijuana’s THC levels may prime the brain for enhanced responses for tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.^{8,9}
- ▲ Less research has been done on today’s marijuana, which has significantly higher THC potency compared to the marijuana of the 1960–70s. We should proceed with caution.

8. “The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids,” The National Academy of Sciences, 2017: <https://bit.ly/2jc3pO3>

9. “Is Marijuana a Gateway Drug,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, updated June 2018: <https://bit.ly/2EZx2Vr>

10. “Does Marijuana Use Affect Driving?” National Institute on Drug Abuse, accessed 8/20/18: <https://bit.ly/1krmQ1D> and “Driver Toxicology Testing and the Involvement of Marijuana in Fatal Crashes, 2010–2014,” Washington Traffic Safety Commission, revised February 2016: <https://bit.ly/2wsmPCO>

11. Joseph M. Pierre, MD, Risks of Increasingly Potent Cannabis: The Joint Effects of Potency and Frequency, *Current Psychiatry*, February 2017: <https://bit.ly/2wovZAS>

WILL THIS POLICY **IMPROVE COMMUNITIES?**

Pope Francis spoke in Rio de Janeiro in July 2013, saying that reducing drug addiction “will not be achieved by a liberalization of drug use.” Instead, society must confront underlying issues that can lead to substance abuse, such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness and loneliness. The Church has focused on combatting these root issues, offering needed substance abuse counseling and providing addiction and child placement services. Proposal 1, in contrast, impedes these necessary efforts. Voters should also not overlook the impact of Proposal 1 on public safety. Other states with legalized marijuana have seen increases in fatal accidents with drivers testing positive for marijuana.¹⁰ While many supporters compare marijuana and alcohol, the way the body reacts upon consumption and time-to-intoxication cannot be evaluated in similar parameters. Unlike alcohol, widely accepted standards do not exist for judging marijuana impairment to assist law enforcement and the courts. Individuals may also have difficulty gauging impairment, especially when the presence and concentration of other additives is rarely known.¹¹ High-potency edibles, or food items made or infused with marijuana, take longer to digest and leave the user unexpectedly vulnerable to effects hours after ingestion.

CLAIM

- ▼ The resulting tax revenue is needed and beneficial for Michigan.

RESPONSE

- ▲ Supporters ignore economic and social costs of legalization, such as regulatory expenses, increased emergency room visits, and increased drugged driving fatalities.
- ▲ Recreational marijuana is still illegal under federal laws, so growers and sellers face challenges using banks and financial markets.
- ▲ Marijuana businesses often operate as cash-only, which makes tax collection difficult and endangers the public as they become targets for crime.



WILL THIS POLICY

MAKE PEOPLE BETTER WORKERS?

Work is more than a paycheck; it is a way to continue participating in God's creation. Scripture teaches that "the Lord blesses our work so that we may share its fruits with others" (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). Since labor uplifts the worker's dignity and contributes to the good of communities, it holds a meaningful place in society. High THC content in marijuana can lead to difficulty remembering, paying attention, and thinking clearly, all of which inhibit worker productivity and put workplace safety at risk.¹² If labor is a way to serve alongside God, why serve at any less than one's full capacity?

CLAIM

- ▼ Legalization will be good for employment and the economy.

RESPONSE

- ▲ Companies in states with legalized recreational marijuana have struggled to find employees who can pass drug tests, especially for federal jobs (direct or contract), industries that require operation of heavy machinery, or jobs requiring truck driving.¹³
- ▲ Research shows employees who tested positive for marijuana in pre-employment drug tests have higher rates of industrial accidents, injuries and absenteeism.¹²

FOR THESE REASONS, THE MCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS JOINS THE HEALTHY & PRODUCTIVE MICHIGAN COALITION TO OPPOSE PROPOSAL 1. VISIT HEALTHYANDPRODUCTIVEMI.ORG TO LEARN MORE.

OFFICIAL BALLOT LANGUAGE PROPOSAL 18-1

A proposed initiated law to authorize and legalize possession, use and cultivation of marijuana products by individuals who are at least 21 years of age and older, and commercial sales of marijuana through state-licensed retailers.

The proposal would:

- Allow individuals 21 and older to purchase, possess and use marijuana and marijuana-infused edibles, and grow up to 12 marijuana plants for personal consumption.
- Impose a 10-ounce limit for marijuana kept at residences and require amounts over 2.5 ounces to be secured in locked containers.
- Create a state licensing system for marijuana businesses and allow municipalities to ban or restrict them.
- Permit retail sales of marijuana and edibles subject to a 10% tax, dedicated to implementation costs, clinical trials, schools, roads and municipalities where marijuana businesses are located.
- Change several current violations from crimes to civil infractions.

Should this proposal be adopted?

YES NO

VOTE NO ON PROPOSAL 18-1!

12. "How does marijuana use affect school, work, and social life?" National Institute on Drug Abuse, updated June 2018: <https://bit.ly/1olZl1v>

13. "Medical Marijuana in the Workplace," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, May 2015: <https://bit.ly/2BPdP0l>

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