



Dear Members of the General Assembly:

As law enforcement personnel from across Virginia, we write to you today to express our strong opposition to a legalized retail marijuana market in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Legalizing retail sales will undermine the work Governor Youngkin's administration has undertaken to improve behavioral health in the Commonwealth. We collectively appreciate the focus on the 'Right Help Right Now Plan' and the strides we have made in better serving our communities with additional behavioral-health resources. First and foremost, cannabis is fundamentally different from alcohol and tobacco, and deserves to be treated as such.

Cannabis is more addictive than alcohol. Thirty percent of cannabis users have cannabis use disorder compared to 11% of alcohol users. Nine percent of those who experiment with marijuana are expected to become addicted according to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) criteria. This increases to 17% for those who begin using as juveniles, and 25% to 50% among daily users.

16.2 million people met the diagnostic criteria for cannabis use disorder, nearly 5% of Americans and 15% of young adults, and account for 11% of all psychosis cases in emergency rooms, a collective of roughly 90,000 cases.

Furthermore, as this discussion of cannabis legalization has been taking place nation-wide, cannabis has been bred to be increasingly stronger. Over the past 50 years, THC content has increased 10 times, and the largest increase has occurred post-legalization.

These statistics bear out why legalizing retail sales of cannabis is the wrong path for Virginia.

Additionally, through the joining creation of the 'Bold Blue Line Partnership' we are seeing crime drop in communities that have been plagued by drug violence for decades. We are getting dealers off the street, seizing harmful drugs and in the process protecting our families from deadly fentanyl.

Many believe that cannabis prohibition creates a violent black market that supports organized crime and leads to violence, therefore legalizing the drug would lower crime. Again, the facts simply do not match reality. States with legal retail cannabis markets have seen no decrease in violent drug-related crime. States with legal retail cannabis have failed to extinguish the cannabis black market while also seeing that cannabis tourism creates a nexus for the international

drug trade that is dominated by organized crime, and an increase in illegal operation following legalization.

In closing, Virginia's public safety cannot be jeopardized by legalizing the harmful drug. A retail market in Virginia will mean an increase in crime, arrests, DUI's with no significant change in tax revenue. The tax revenues raised would be miniscule compared to the additional funding required to increase behavioral-health resources and other public safety resources.

We respectfully ask that you oppose any legislation that would lead to a retail cannabis market in Virginia.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Lenny Millholland

President of Virginia Sheriffs Association

Sheriff of Frederick County, Virginia

The Honorable Bill Carrico

Executive Director of the Virginia State Police Association

Ms. Dana Schrad

Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and Foundation, Inc.

Virginia Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators