

A Declaration of Principles, by Doctors for Cannabis Regulation

We, the Board of Directors, Honorary Board, and Founding Physician Members of Doctors for Cannabis Regulation, with firm reliance on science and reason, hereby endorse this Declaration of Principles.

We believe cannabis prohibition is harmful.

- There are more than 700,000 cannabis arrests in the United States annually,¹ encumbering our overburdened criminal justice system and draining law enforcement's already limited resources.
- Nationwide, African-Americans are nearly four times more likely than whites to be arrested for cannabis possession, despite similar usage rates between the two groups.²
- Low-income individuals face disproportionate consequences from cannabis arrests due to inability to pay fines, inadequate access to counsel, and potential loss of employment, housing, and student loans.^{3,4} Poverty reduces access to healthcare and undermines public health.⁵
- Cannabis prohibition has led to the proliferation of dangerous synthetic cannabinoids.⁶
- Despite evidence that legal access to medical cannabis is correlated with a 25% reduction in opioid overdose deaths,⁷ which currently number more than 28,000 per year in the U.S.,⁸ prohibition prevents many patients from obtaining medical cannabis, even in states with medical cannabis laws.⁹

We believe cannabis prohibition is ineffective.

- More than 22,000,000 Americans currently use cannabis,¹⁰ which represents 7% of the U.S. population.
- Cannabis prohibition has failed to prevent access by minors. Since the 1970s, 80-90% of American eighteen-year-olds have consistently reported that cannabis is "very easy" or "fairly easy" to obtain.¹¹
- For decades, preventive education has reduced the rates of alcohol and tobacco use by minors, while underage cannabis use has risen.¹²

We believe cannabis prohibition is unnecessary.

- The vast majority of adults are unharmed by the responsible use of cannabis.¹³
- The health risks of cannabis misuse are less than those of alcohol and tobacco.^{14,15}
- Evidence does not support a causal "gateway" relationship between the use of cannabis and the later use of more harmful drugs.^{16,17}

We therefore support cannabis legalization for adults, preventive education of minors, and regulation of the industry.

- Legalization encourages honesty in patient-doctor communication about cannabis use.¹⁸
- Legalization facilitates research into the health risks and medical benefits of cannabis use.^{19,20}
- Ending prohibition creates a legal distinction between underage and adult cannabis use. If we want our children to believe that cannabis can be harmful for them, then we must differentiate use by adults and minors.²¹
- Regulation benefits public health by enabling government oversight of the production, testing, labeling, distribution, and sale of cannabis.²²
- Legalization takes the cannabis market out of the hands of illegal dealers, who do not pay taxes and sell cannabis—along with dangerous drugs—to minors as well as adults.²³
- Tax revenues from cannabis can fund research, education, substance abuse treatment, and community reinvestment.²⁴
- Legalization reduces the disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on low-income and minority citizens.²⁵

We call upon physicians and medical associations to promote cannabis regulation as an alternative to prohibition. Once supplied with the evidence, even physicians who vigorously oppose cannabis use may logically advocate its legalization for adults.

With confidence in the judgment of history, we commit our names to the support of this Declaration, published on the eighteenth day of April, 2016.



**The Board of Directors, Honorary Board, and Founding Physician Members
DOCTORS FOR CANNABIS REGULATION**



Doctors for Cannabis Regulation

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