



# Principles for a Public Health and Equity Approach to Cannabis Regulation

The primary goals of cannabis legalization should be to establish a legal market to reduce unjust incarceration and to institute regulatory structures to prevent or mitigate harm. Cannabis, like alcohol and tobacco, is an addictive substance that should not be treated as an ordinary commodity in the marketplace. The basic philosophy underlying the following principles is that cannabis sales should be cautiously legalized to reduce the social harm of illegality, but that cannabis sale and consumption should not be normalized. We recommend the following:

## Protect Children & Youth



- Prohibit any products, packaging or marketing attractive to children or youth, such as cannabis-infused beverages, flavored combustibles, vaping products and wrappers, and products that resemble candy.
- Limit the number of dispensaries to fewer than 1:15,000 people to reduce exposure and social normalization while allowing access.
- Require buffer zones around schools, colleges, and other youth-serving facilities.

## Promote Economic & Social Justice & Mitigate Harms from the War on Drugs



- Prioritize equity in licensing applicants (for example, residents of communities impacted by high drug incarceration rates).
- Reduce cannabis related incarceration and automatically expunge past criminal convictions for non-violent cannabis-related crimes (Ex: CA: AB-1793).
- Keep economic benefits from cannabis legalization in communities most negatively affected by the "war on drugs."
- Assure that that past cannabis convictions, which have affected the lives of so many men and women from black and Latino communities, not be a barrier to moving into the legal market.
- Capture tax revenue for prevention, substance abuse treatment, mitigating negative social impacts of the war on drugs, and public education campaigns.

## Do Not Worsen Health Inequity



- From the start of the regulatory process, place public health authorities in leadership roles (something that took centuries for tobacco).
- Avoid exacerbating existing health inequity such as low birth weight, poor mental health outcomes, or lower high school graduation rates.
- Inform vulnerable groups of the risks of use, such as during pregnancy, mental health effects, and immigration risks. (Ex: 69% of cannabis dispensaries in Denver recommended cannabis for pregnancy-related morning sickness).

## Minimize Harm and Inform the Public



- Minimize cannabis dependency and attendant health and social harms by limiting potency of allowed products and aggressive marketing.
- Require warning labels on any advertising & prominent graphic warnings on packages.
- Prohibit therapeutic health claims for recreational cannabis products.
- Use specialized business model (no food or other product sales) to reduce normalization.
- Require prominent health warnings in stores and to consumers.
- Extend smoke-free air restrictions to include cannabis.

## Avert the Emergence of a New Tobacco-Like Industry



- Avoid transferring control to outside investors by favoring worker cooperatives/non-profits or similar structures.
- Preserve local control so communities can be more stringent (except as regards incarceration), up to and including, bans on all commercial activities.
- Prohibit conflicts of interest in regulatory bodies, advisory commissions, and for regulators and prescribers.