



Media Announcement

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New Commentary in JAMA: California’s Industry Friendly Regulatory Approach to Cannabis Undermines Public Health

Medical & Public Health Experts Urge Support for Prominent Front of Pack Warning Labels and Stronger Public Health Protections

(CA) A new commentary published in the prestigious *JAMA Health Forum* offers a timely analysis of how an industry-friendly approach to cannabis regulation is undermining the health of Californians – particularly vulnerable populations. The article - [California Cannabis Markets—Why Industry-Friendly Regulation Is Not Good Public Health](#) – authored by a trio of substance abuse and public health experts, asserts that as cannabis legalization spreads and markets expand, states must put in place more sensible guardrails that prioritize public health, protect youth and advance social equity.

The commentary comes at a critical moment in time, as the California legislature grapples with how to properly tax and regulate an increasingly powerful and influential cannabis industry. The authors highlight a particularly important piece of legislation being debated in the Legislature that epitomizes one example of how a more effective balance between protecting public health and maximizing cannabis industry profit could be struck. As the authors explain, [SB 1097 \(Senator Pan\) - The Cannabis Right to Know Act](#) - would address a gaping regulatory hole in California simply by requiring more prominent and accurate health warnings on cannabis products and required health warnings and safer use information for consumers.

Dr. Richard Pan, State Senator and pediatrician said, “This article calls attention to the significant risks of cannabis promotion and usage to children and youth, including adverse outcomes resulting from cannabis use during pregnancy. I authored SB 1097 – the Cannabis Right to Know Act – so that cannabis packaging reflects public health concerns by prominently informing consumers about risks to mental health, in order to protect all cannabis consumers and California’s children.”

The commentary acknowledges positive impacts of cannabis legalization, most notably, the rapid decline of cannabis possession offenses, a conveyor belt to widespread incarceration. However, this progress has been systematically undercut by California’s failure to take seriously the public health concerns related to cannabis commercialization, use, product potency, and marketing tactics. Examples include:

- Increasing [daily or near daily use](#) across the state;
- Decreasing public awareness of cannabis’s associated health risks;
- A [25% relative increase in the rate of cannabis use](#) among pregnant women;
- Skyrocketing [California emergency room \(ER\) visits](#) for cannabis related diagnoses; and,

- The proliferation of higher and higher potency cannabis products, often flavored, mimicking candy or products marketed to kids, resulting in increasing numbers of Californians suffering from adverse effects.

“Young people and pregnant women in California are consuming turbocharged cannabis products with no guidance about serious mental health risks, risks to the developing brain and other adverse effects,” said **Dr. Lynn Silver, co-author of the commentary, and director of Getting it Right from the Start, at the Public Health Institute**. “Rather than awarding prizes for the most addictive high-potency cannabis products, states should consider strong, prominent, and accurate health warnings like those originally proposed – a first step to fulfill our responsibility to educate consumers and protect our children and youth.”

The commentary concludes with a nationwide call to action:

As a nation, we have a collective responsibility to the next generation. It is time to stop harming children by allowing industry to invent increasingly potent and youth-appealing products and end stigmatizing pregnant individuals who use a product sold by an industry that profits from misleading claims of safety. Instead, where legalization is in place, let us create an environment that protects the vulnerable and steers those adults who use cannabis toward moderate use of safer products.

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More About SB 1097 – The Cannabis Right to Know Act

SB 1097 would educate consumers about key well-recognized health risks associated with cannabis use and exacerbated by the market shift to turbocharged, ultra-high THC products. These risks, including potential adverse effects on mental health such as psychosis and suicidal thoughts, impaired driving, and low birth weight of infants exposed during pregnancy, and others, will be included in brochures made available to consumers and mental health warnings would be prominently added to product packaging.

The legislation is supported by the Public Health Institute, Youth Forward, a broad coalition of medical groups, including the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles and Santa Clara counties, and over 50 public health organizations, youth and parent organizations, but opposed by the cannabis industry which has already weakened its provisions. The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on August 3rd, 2022, which, if passed, would move on to an Assembly Floor vote.