

Press Release

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Sen. Dr. Richard Pan, Physician, Parent, Public Health, Youth, Child and Substance Abuse Groups Urge State Legislature to Pass Cannabis Right to Know Act

SB 1097 will inform and educate California cannabis consumers and protect our children and youth

(CA) Today, pediatricians, obstetricians, emergency medicine physicians, addiction medicine specialists, public health, youth, children's and substance use prevention groups, and parents whose children have suffered from serious cannabis related health harms came together for a virtual press conference to call on the State legislature to pass [The Cannabis Right to Know Act](#) (SB 1097 – Senator Pan). The bill, which would place prominent health warnings on cannabis products, will educate consumers and protect children and youth, while supporting the legal cannabis market over the illicit one. The legislation is scheduled for a hearing in the **Assembly Business and Professions Committee on April 4, 2022.**

"I authored the Cannabis Right to Know Act because current health warnings required for cannabis products are insufficient to communicate well-established health risks, especially to our youth. Many are unaware of the specific risks from illicit products and of those shared with legal products," **said State Senator and Pediatrician Dr. Richard Pan.** "This bill will help protect our youth and inform consumers, while encouraging the purchase of legal cannabis products over illicit ones."

SB 1097 will effectively educate consumers about key well-recognized health risks associated with cannabis use exacerbated by the market shift to turbocharged, ultra-high THC products. These risks, including potential adverse effects on mental health, driving, on infants exposed during pregnancy, lungs, and others, will be prominently displayed using rotating front-of-pack health messages on products. The bill will also require retailers to provide consumers with vetted information on simple steps for safer use – like "start low and go slow." Finally, it will encourage legal over illicit cannabis purchases by including prominent why "Buy Legal" health warning messages. **SB 1097 aligns California labeling with evidence-based best practices** for communicating health warnings in use internationally and those being adopted by the FDA for cigarettes. This new information requires **only low-cost modifications** to labels and marketing materials that manufacturers must already print and update regularly as part of doing business.

"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. While legal sales have increased by 249% since 2018, products have grown significantly more potent without warning consumers," said **Dr. Lynn Silver, Director of Getting it Right from the Start, at the Public Health Institute.** "The Cannabis Right to Know Act is a first step to fulfill our responsibility to educate consumers and protect our children and youth."

[SB 1097](#) supporters cite a perfect storm of factors that create an urgent need for the legislation. These include profoundly inadequate current health warnings, [with labels typically hidden, disguised, or in extremely small font, tripling of daily or near daily use](#) across the state since 2008, decreasing public awareness of cannabis's

associated health risks, a [25% relative increase in the rate of cannabis use](#) among pregnant women during the pandemic, and skyrocketing [California emergency room \(ER\) visits](#) for cannabis related diagnoses. Proliferation of higher and higher potency cannabis products, often flavored, mimic candy, and marketed to kids, including edibles that are appealing to children and easily consumable, have served as key drivers for the increasing numbers of Californians suffering from adverse effects. [Recent research](#) indicates that prominent, pictorial, cannabis health information labels are a proven, effective, and well-accepted approach to educating the public at little or no added cost to government or consumers.

[Among the bill's supporters](#) are the Public Health Institute, Youth Forward, California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – California, American Academy of Pediatrics – California, the California Society of Addiction Medicine, Santa Clara County, Moms Strong, the LA Trust for Children's Health, Pueblo y Salud, the Community Coalition – over 50 organizations. [A recent national Harris Poll](#) found that 80% of Americans want a way to verify the safety of cannabis products before using them and 58% feel overwhelmed by the wide array of products.

Additional Press Conference Speaker Quotes

Jim Keddy, Executive Director, Youth Forward: "Intensive marketing and billboards, often targeting youth, are misleading our kids to believe cannabis is a safe wellness product. Cannabis use during adolescence and early adulthood, is especially risky to the developing brain. As the California legal cannabis market matures and expands, there is an urgent need for more clear, prominent, accurate and comprehensive health information for our young people to understand the risks to their mental health and cognitive development.

Dr. Roneet Lev, Emergency Physician UC Scripps San Diego and California Chapter - American College of Emergency Physicians: "I see firsthand the growing tide of people ending up in our Emergency Departments with psychosis, severe anxiety, delirium, accidental ingestion, severe vomiting, car accidents and other problems associated with using cannabis – especially when it is too strong or used too frequently. Californians deserve to be accurately and clearly informed about potential health risks of cannabis and to understand simple precautions they can take to use more safely if they decide to use, to stay out of our EDs."

Dr. Hayley Miller, Obstetrician in maternal and fetal medicine at Stanford University and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) District IX: "I see a growing number of pregnant people in my practice who use marijuana, for several reasons, including nausea in pregnancy. Use of marijuana during pregnancy may place the health of the pregnant individual and the fetus at risk. Using cannabis during pregnancy may increase the risk for smaller size babies at birth, stillbirth, and neurodevelopmental problems for the child. Based on data supported by ACOG, I encourage all pregnant people or people contemplating pregnancy to discontinue marijuana use. And to help in this effort, every pregnant woman needs to be clearly informed of these potential harms to her child. SB 1097 will do exactly that."

Dr. Tim Cermak, Psychiatrist, Past-President, California Society of Addiction Medicine: "Adolescents are at greatest risk of being harmed by cannabis. Dramatic increases in THC concentration in cannabis products, despite our requests for study and regulation, increase the risks for psychosis and other mental health disorders, educational deficits, and motor vehicle crashes. The Cannabis Right to Know Act offers a proven, well-accepted and low-cost approach to educating the public and helping our youth know the risks."

Barbara Ferrara – Mother - From Cal Tech to Homeless: "My son was valedictorian of his class and won a scholarship to Caltech. He started using cannabis in college after his father died, perhaps to mask his grief. After

a year, he developed psychosis. He was evicted because of his frightening psychotic behavior. The type of cannabis products he used went from simple joints to high concentrated oils I never heard of. He was living in a van until even that became unsafe, and he is now homeless. His cannabis induced psychosis has now become permanent schizophrenia. High potency THC ruined my son's mind. I worry vaporized oils will ruin his lungs too. I wish I knew - I wish my son knew about the many hazards of high potency THC. That is why we need SB 1097."