



April 4, 2017

TO: The Honorable Mark Hass, Chair  
Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

FROM: Karen Girard, Manager  
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Center for Prevention and Health Promotion  
Public Health Division  
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: SB 845: Distribution of retail marijuana taxes

The purpose of this testimony is to provide information on the importance of funding marijuana prevention and education programs, particularly programs directed at protecting Oregon youth.

In 2016, 8 percent of Oregon eighth-graders and 22 percent of Oregon 11th-graders reported current marijuana use. More youth currently use marijuana than smoke cigarettes and report that it is easier to obtain marijuana than cigarettes.

Approximately half of Oregon adults (51 percent) report ever using marijuana, and one in 10 adults (12 percent) report having used marijuana in the past 30 days. This is highest among young adults age 18 to 24.<sup>1</sup>

Youth and adults both demonstrate limited understanding of marijuana laws and the health effects of marijuana use and less than one-third of Oregon adults (29 percent) say they have seen information about health risks of using marijuana in their communities in the last month.<sup>1</sup>

Perception of risk from weekly marijuana use, as well as belief that either friends or parents think marijuana use is wrong, declined modestly for both eighth and eleventh graders between 2015 and 2016 during recreational marijuana legalization.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Public Health Division. *Marijuana report: Marijuana use, attitudes and health effects in Oregon, December 2016*. Oregon Health Authority. Portland, OR. 2016 December.

In March 2016 the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 4014, which provided OHA with \$3.97 million to develop, pilot and evaluate a youth marijuana use prevention campaign to increase awareness of the possible negative effects of marijuana use by youth and young adults.

In response, OHA created *Stay True to You*, a mass media health education campaign directed at youth and young adults that includes *Talk With Them*, a component directed at parents and youth-serving adults. This campaign was piloted in an urban and rural area of the state.

After five months of implementation, the mid-term evaluation of the campaign indicates the campaign has had a positive effect on youth and young adults' perceptions of the social norms around youth marijuana use and on their knowledge of the legal consequences of marijuana use before 21. The mid-term evaluation did not show a significant change in youth and young adult intent to use marijuana.<sup>2</sup>

As we have learned from our work on tobacco prevention and education, a media campaign is important but not sufficient alone for addressing the health-related challenges presented by marijuana use. Preventing youth from using marijuana requires a comprehensive public health response that includes support in every community for family and for youth, whether or not they already use marijuana. The *Stay True to You* campaign is having a positive effect among youth and young adults in the pilot areas and is ready to be implemented statewide. Oregon's investment in the campaign will be enhanced by strategic collaboration across Oregon's public health and health care systems to reach every community in Oregon.

Programs, services, and policies addressing substance misuse are part of OHA's ongoing responsibilities. Preventing youth from starting to use marijuana and other substances is part of OHA's work to promote the life-long health of Oregonians. Currently, OHA receives 5 percent of the retail marijuana tax brought in by the state. This allocation would allow OHA to continue to implement small-scale, targeted, effective marijuana prevention and education efforts. However, this bill eliminates the allocation of retail marijuana tax monies to OHA, putting at risk OHA's ability to implement even small-scale marijuana education and prevention efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> Oregon Public Health Division. Oregon Youth Marijuana Prevention Pilot Campaign: *Stay True to You* Mid-Campaign Results. January 2016. Oregon Health Authority. Portland, OR. 2016 January.

To fully address youth marijuana prevention, OHA-PHD recommends providing support throughout the state to youth, young adults, and parents to prevent underage use of marijuana. OHA also recommends adopting policies to track marijuana advertising, limit marijuana marketing and promotion, prohibit sale of flavored products, and maintain local control to protect Oregon's youth and young adults from the potential negative health effects of marijuana use.

We know what works for substance use prevention and education in Oregon communities and we have the systems in place to support local communities to engage in these efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for SB 845. Please feel free to contact me with questions.