

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

September 25, 2019

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

We represent a diverse coalition of medical professionals, addiction treatment providers, drug prevention organizations, law enforcement, communities of faith, and public policy advocacy organizations who are deeply concerned with our country's present addiction crisis. We urge you to slow down and proceed carefully with measures that would expand the promotion and advertising of increased marijuana use, like the SAFE Banking Act.

The Surgeon General recently issued the first Surgeon General's Advisory on marijuana since 1982, warning young people and pregnant women to abstain from marijuana use.¹ During the press conference, the Surgeon General warned that "This is not your mother's marijuana."² Today's high potency marijuana is fundamentally different from anything that existed before.³ The Surgeon General's Advisory was driven in part by alarming increases in youth vaping of marijuana oils⁴ and pregnant women using marijuana for morning sickness,⁵ which can have damaging effects on the developing brain⁶ and is linked to low birth weight.⁷

In response to the mysterious lung illnesses that have been in part caused by high potency marijuana vapes, the Food and Drug Administration issued an advisory urging the public to abstain from using these products⁸ and the Centers for Disease Control has advised that no single

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/addiction-and-substance-misuse/advisory-on-marijuana-use-and-developing-brain/index.html>

² HHS/Surgeon General's Press Conference on August 29, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP7kXJnX9z8>

³ Alzghari, S. K., Fung, V., Rickner, S. S., Chacko, L., & Fleming, S. W. (2017). To Dab or Not to Dab: Rising Concerns Regarding the Toxicity of Cannabis Concentrates. *Cureus*, 9(9), e1676. doi:10.7759/cureus.1676.

⁴ Johnston, L. D., Miech, R. A., Bachman, J. G., Schulenberg, J. E., & Patrick, M. E. (2018). *Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use 1975- 2018. Overview, Key Findings on Adolescent Drug Use*. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

⁵ Volkow N.D., Han B., Compton W.M., McCance-Katz E.F. Self-reported Medical and Non-medical Cannabis Use Among Pregnant Women in the United States. *JAMA*. 2019 doi:10.1001/jama.2019.7982

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. *The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: Current state of evidence and recommendations for research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

⁷ Crume et al: Cannabis use during the perinatal period in a state with legalized recreational and medical marijuana: the association between maternal characteristics, breastfeeding patterns, and neonatal outcomes. *J Pediatr*. 2018;197:90-96.

⁸ <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/vaping-illnesses-consumers-can-help-protect-themselves-avoiding-tetrahydrocannabinol-thc-containing>

substance responsible has been identified.⁹ Oregon dispensaries have been pulling products from their shelves in response to a death after a man had purchased marijuana vapes from licensed dispensaries.¹⁰

In light of the Surgeon General's Advisory and the marijuana vaping crisis, it would be irresponsible to change the law in ways that encourage increased investment in the marijuana industry without any guardrails for public health. We urge you to postpone consideration of the SAFE Banking Act (H.R. 1595/S. 1200) until we can understand the roots of the marijuana vaping crisis and put in place public health guardrails. Any process for addressing this legislation should allow for a fulsome debate and consideration of amendments that address the public health impact of drug policy changes.

Sincerely,

Smart Approaches to Marijuana Action (SAM Action)
Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee
Illinois State Conference NAACP
Major County Sheriffs of America
Heritage Action
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
Faith and Freedom Coalition
National Drug & Alcohol Screening Association (NDASA)
Eagle Forum
Family Policy Alliance
Center on Addiction
New York State PTA
Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY)
Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police
Drug Free America Foundation, Inc.
National Families in Action
Parent Movement 2.0
Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.
Community Action, Service & Advocacy
Americans Against Legalizing Marijuana
California Coalition Against Drugs
Save Our Society from Drugs
San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth
San Marcos Prevention Coalition
Citizens for a Safe and Healthy Texas
Physicians Families and Friends for a Better Vermont, Education Fund
Marijuana Victims Alliance
Cannabis Industry Victims Educating Litigators CIVEL
Take Back America Campaign
Parents Opposed to Pot
Partners in Safety

⁹ https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html#latest-outbreak-information

¹⁰ AP: Oregon pot retailers begin pulling vape brands in lung scare. September 12, 2019.
<https://apnews.com/6e60b5eb4fa145efb838d368d2457046>

SafeLaunch
Hillsborough County Anti-Drug Alliance
Washingtonians Against Legalizing Marijuana