

Once again, pot rolls out risky proposition

Marijuana makes schools, highways, workplaces less safe

The marijuana industry rolled out its latest initiative, saying this time they'll protect kids and public safety. Based on history, we can't believe them.

"The only promise they've ever kept is to rake in as much profit as possible," said Sheila Polk, chair of Arizonans for Responsible Drug Policy. "When you look at all the promises they've broken, you have to wonder how this initiative will be any different."

For instance, in 2010, the medical marijuana lobby told the people of Arizona it would not press for recreational marijuana, and it would keep pot away from our kids.

It took six years before they broke the first promise. They never kept the second. With only medical marijuana allowed in Arizona:

- Regular use of marijuana by teens rose by 33 percent from 2016 to 2018, according to the [Arizona Youth Survey](#).
- One-fourth of teens have used concentrates. Often packaged as youth-friendly gummy bears or brownies, these high-THC products are up to 26 times more potent than the pot of the past and have been linked to [higher incidences of psychosis](#).
- One-fourth of teens who use marijuana said they got it from a medical marijuana cardholder, and nearly 11 percent said they bought it at a dispensary — places that are supposed to be off limits to teens.

"Pot's promoters are again telling us that marijuana is safe. The science doesn't support that," says Dr. Dale Guthrie, FAAP, a pediatrician and former president of the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"There is much we still don't know about marijuana's long-term effects, but emerging research raises a lot of red flags," Dr. Guthrie says. "We know marijuana is extremely harmful to the developing adolescent brain, and that legalizing marijuana is a green

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light for more young people to use it — and for more young lives to be derailed by drug use."

The marijuana industry's marketing slogans obscure these plain facts.

"What these megacorporations really promise is this," Polk says. "Your children's futures will be derailed. You'll share the highway with drivers high on pot — the initiative implicitly acknowledges there will be more stoned drivers on Arizona's streets and roads. Oh, and the people who pushed through medical marijuana and then broke all their promises — they're first in line for recreational licenses. How convenient."

Consider the other states that experimented with mainstreaming marijuana.

Colorado, the nation's trailblazer in allowing recreational pot, has seen increases in marijuana-related [traffic deaths, emergency room visits and hospitalizations](#). The black market [thrives](#), as it can now hide in plain sight. Commercialization inspired the push for ever higher—and dangerous—potency levels.

The pot industry claimed marijuana is the answer to the opioid crisis. It's not. [Recent research](#) found that states with medical marijuana laws have average rates of opioid overdose deaths nearly 23% higher than those without these laws.

Marijuana is not benign.

In Arizona, marijuana was listed as a contributing factor in [nearly half of child deaths involving substance use in 2017](#), well ahead of alcohol or any other substance. The poison control center serving Maricopa County reports a tenfold increase over the past five years in calls regarding young children exposed to marijuana. Positive workplace tests for marijuana have tripled in Arizona since 2010, reaching the same level as in Colorado, according to [Quest Diagnostics](#).

Marijuana legalization is a failed experiment. Results have been disastrous in the few states that have tried it. Tax revenues fall far short of promises and are woefully inadequate to cover the increased costs of social services, addiction, drug treatment, homelessness, crime, law enforcement, product inspections, education and healthcare.

"Legalizing marijuana is neither smart nor safe," Polk said. "Just as they did in 2016, Arizonans should reject this risky gamble with public health and safety."