

**Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM)  
Sue Homola, SAM NH Chairman**

**NH House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee  
30 Jan 2025**

**HB186-FN-A, legalization and regulation of cannabis and making appropriations therefor.**

Due to a scheduling conflict, SAM NH is unable to provide in-person testimony on HB186-FN-A, so written testimony is provided below.

In 2024, SAM NH provided extensive testimony on the negative public health consequences of recreational marijuana legalization to this committee. None of the data we provided has changed, and recreational marijuana continues to negatively impact the public health of states who already legalized.

In addition to increasing addiction rates among citizens, recreational legalization has shown to increase psychiatric visits to emergency rooms, more incidents of DUI, an increase in calls to Poison Control due to accidental poisoning of a child, an increase in the reported number of child neglect cases, and an increase in youth drug usage.

Of note, HB186-FN-A states that “Scientifically and medically accurate public education campaigns educating youth and adults about the health and safety risks of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and other substances, including education campaigns separately targeting youth and adults that provide medically and scientifically accurate information about the health and safety risks posed by cannabis use, including driving under the influence of cannabis.”

While that sounds proactive, our state’s current Therapeutic Medical Cannabis Program has had difficulty even delivering on law-mandated public health education, (for example, the poster warning pregnant women on the dangers of marijuana usage). There is little confidence that if we can’t even deliver education through the state’s medical marijuana program, then we certainly can’t scale it up effectively to cover public education for all Granite Staters.

One glaring issue is that this bill legalizes marijuana for individuals 21 years old. “Scientifically and medically accurate” data has already proven that the human brain reaches full development at approximately 25 years old. When marijuana is consumed by individuals who do not have fully developed brains, this federally illegal, Schedule 1 drug rewires the brain in negative ways. If our state was serious about scientifically and medically accurate information, it would not legalize marijuana for those under age 25.

**Resources:**

- <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/dsa/Page17999.aspx>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/articles/2024/04/understanding-how-cannabis-use-affects-brain-development-and-mental-health>
- <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/STR.0000000000000396>

Note: there are countless resources on the topic of marijuana and brain health – these are just a few.

**SAM NH RECOMMENDATION:** Do not legalize recreational marijuana.