

**Naperville Community Unit District 203**

**Board of Education**

**Statement to Naperville City Council**

**September 3, 2019**

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**Testimony concerning Sale of Recreational Cannabis in Naperville**

Members of the City Council, thank you for your invitation to comment on the sale of recreational cannabis in Naperville. Though we rarely comment on issues before the City Council, we appreciate your acknowledgement that this decision will have an impact on the students we serve. The comments below represent the views of the Naperville Community Unit School District 203 Board of Education, speaking on behalf of the students, parents, staff, administrators and school communities that we have been elected to represent.

Though we appreciate the opportunity to provide our concerns regarding the sale of recreational cannabis, we would respectfully note that the time frame for comments did not allow for the degree of public engagement we believe to be essential on such an important issue. We would have liked to follow the Board of Education process of passing a resolution, which allows time for our community to comment on this issue. The short timeframe provided did not allow for this process. It is our true belief that this is the most thorough way to engage our community, and we would urge the City Council accordingly to slow down and allow our Naperville 203 community the time to engage in this process.

However, the short time frame notwithstanding, we must convey that we have heard significant concerns from the Naperville 203 community about sales of recreational cannabis in Naperville. This includes Naperville 203 students, parents, staff, administrators, service providers and community volunteers. Some of these individuals have spoken before the City Council; however, those who have spoken are only a small portion of the population of our 203 community who are concerned about this issue. In preparation for this statement our Board of Education spoke with many members of our community. Though it is not unanimous, the majority of the District 203 community has serious concerns about the sale of recreational cannabis in Naperville. As a community we are adamantly opposed to teen drug use. Like alcohol and tobacco, teen drug use exposes students to a lifetime of harmful consequences.

The fact that the majority of teen addiction service providers in Naperville, such as Linden Oaks, Rosecrance and Kids Matter, are expressing serious concerns about the impact on teens in our community, weighs heavily on our Board of Education and Naperville 203 community. Over the past few weeks, these groups have provided significant data and information regarding the potential impact on teens in our community. We would urge the City Council to listen to the concerns of those experts who are currently working with Naperville teens, parents and families.

The data from the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Traffic Area and Colorado School Resource Officers suggest that our schools can expect significant increases of marijuana possession and students under the influence of marijuana because of the legalization of marijuana. Data also suggest that both adults and college students age 18-21, increase their own usage due to increased access to marijuana. We have grave concern that teen use will

follow that of adults and college students, and we would ask the City Council to take the time to obtain data from communities who have opted in vs. opted out of retail sales to compare the usage of teens within these communities and the number of school based incidents. Based on the increase usage due to legalization and access to marijuana, we fear that we would put our teens, not to mention preteens, at even greater risk of marijuana use and school related incidents regarding marijuana by allowing access in our own community.

We know that teen use of marijuana, particularly before age 13, puts teens at greater risk of substance abuse addiction and negatively impacts brain development. Our community is currently experiencing rampant growth in teen vaping, with the number of teens that vape more than doubling in the last two years. The negative consequences of teen vaping only continue to grow as more and more teens increase their use and as serious health effects become evident. Given the unmitigated growth in teen vaping, it seems that the likely progression for youth will be the vaping of marijuana. We have serious concerns that increased access of THC and other marijuana associated products will combine with growing trends in teen vaping, leading to additional teens vaping marijuana products, which will subject teens, to even greater consequences than smoking marijuana products.

Another concern for teens is driving while impaired. So much progress has been made through organizations such as Students Against Drunk Driving and Mothers Against Drunk Driving to lessen the likelihood of teens driving while intoxicated. Strict enforcement of the .08 law has helped teens to understand the consequences of driving while impaired with alcohol. States such as Colorado have seen traffic fatalities due to marijuana intoxication more than double since legalization of marijuana. We fear increased impairment due to marijuana use for teen drivers, particularly as police officers grapple with how to speedily and effectively test for this impairment.

Researching Colorado's effort to address teen usage is perhaps most apt for the conversation regarding opting out of recreational sales. Many Colorado efforts have focused on showing teens that marijuana use IS harmful for them, despite the legality of adult use. Similar to the difficulty in sending this nuanced message with teen alcohol use, teen perception of harm is at issue. In fact, teens' perception of the harm entailed by regularly smoking marijuana has dramatically changed over the last thirty years. As outlined in the presentation by Rosecrance, in 1991, 82 percent of teens believed that regular use of marijuana was harmful. Today, only 38 percent of teens believe it to be harmful. **Our message to the teens of Naperville is that smoking marijuana poses dramatic risks to their present and long-term health.** We believe that opting out of retail sales would send a strong message to teens that marijuana use is harmful to their health and unacceptable in their community.

In conclusion, the District 203 Board of Education, speaking on behalf of the many students, parents, district staff and administrators and community, has serious concerns about the impact of recreational marijuana sales on the teens in our school district. We urge the City Council to consider the impact of its actions on the teens in our community. Though we direct these comments to our Naperville elected officials, our statements about teen harm are not confined to the City of Naperville. District 203 educates students in Lisle, Woodridge, Bolingbrook and unincorporated areas of these communities. We are sending these comments to the elected representatives of all these areas so that they can be aware of our concerns about the serious risks of marijuana use for teens and our concern about the risk of increased access posed by recreational sales.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment this evening. We take seriously our role as elected officials to advocate for the safety and well-being of the students of our community. District 203 greatly values our partnership with the City Council to achieve this mission, and we are hopeful that you will hear the concerns of our community and act accordingly this evening.