As members of the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission (ICJC) with the vision of “collaborating for a safer Idaho,” it is incumbent upon us to address the issue of marijuana legalization based on current research and data. It is clear from the numerous, credible research studies regarding marijuana that the use of this drug is linked to public health and safety dangers. Therefore, the ICJC is opposed to the legalization of marijuana and efforts to approve marijuana as medicine outside of the scientifically rigorous Federal Drug Administration (FDA) process.

The FDA has deemed marijuana a Schedule I drug which has not passed standards of safety and efficacy for approval as medicine. There are clear, negative health consequences of marijuana use. The Institute of Medicine has reported that marijuana smoke contains 50-70% more cancer-causing agents than smoked tobacco\(^1\) and the American Medical Association and most other major health organizations do not support the legalization and use of marijuana as medicine. Additional studies have linked marijuana use to chronic bronchitis and other respiratory illnesses\(^2\), impaired immune function, and testicular cancer\(^3\).


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**Medical Marijuana**

Adopted February 25, 2013
Marijuana also negatively affects the development of the adolescent brain⁴ and has been directly linked to mental illnesses including depression and anxiety.⁵ Further, multiple studies have determined that its use may precipitate schizophrenia in vulnerable individuals and exacerbate psychosis.⁶ Also of concern, it is clear from the science that marijuana is addictive, with 1 in 9 adults and 1 in 6 adolescents who use the drug meeting criteria for addiction.⁷ Of particular note, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana – THC – has increased in potency nearly six-fold over the past 30 years.⁸ Underscoring marijuana’s potency and potential harmfulness to adolescents is this: Abuse of the drug accounts for 67 percent of admissions to adolescent substance-abuse treatment in the United States, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Public safety dangers caused by marijuana use are also of the utmost concern to ICJC. Marijuana use consistently predicts a greater likelihood of involvement in crime and the criminal justice system⁹ and a consistent link between frequent marijuana use and violent crime and property damage has been identified among juveniles.¹⁰ In addition, crime related to marijuana outlets has risen in medical marijuana states. For example, data from the Denver Police Department shows as of June 2012 a 69% increase in overall crime at medical marijuana dispensaries and a 75% increase in burglaries as compared to June of 2011. Of note, personal marijuana users are rarely arrested and incarcerated. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

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at Columbia University, less than 1% (0.9%) of jail and prison inmates in the U.S. are incarcerated for marijuana possession as their sole offense.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, marijuana is the most prevalent drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured drivers, and crash victims. In a study by the Institute for Behavioral Health, in 2009, 28% of all fatally injured drivers were positive for marijuana and 20% of crashes in the U.S. were caused by drugged driving. This translates into approximately 8,600 deaths, 580,000 injuries and $33 billion in damages each year. More specific data regarding the links between marijuana and decreased public safety come from the nearby state of Montana where 43% of all DUlD cases involve THC.


Based on the scientific evidence, the ICJC supports the FDA’s determination marijuana is a dangerous drug with no medical use and a high potential for abuse, and stands against the legalization of marijuana and efforts to approve marijuana as medicine outside of the scientifically rigorous FDA process.