

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4605

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Ralph Northam,

I write to you today to express my strong opposition to legalizing marijuana in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Specifically, I urge you not to sign HB 2312 into law, which would legalize adult recreational use of marijuana and allow for the sale of marijuana by 2024.

This legislation would undermine the rule of law. Marijuana is a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act. Accordingly, no state has the jurisdiction to legalize recreational use of marijuana without Congressionally enacted reform or the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) taking administrative action to reschedule it. As recent as 2016, the DEA has reviewed and determined that under its judgement marijuana should remain a Schedule I substance.¹ Furthermore, if marijuana is legalized, those who have been profiting from its sale in the current illegal drug trade will undoubtedly refocus and intensify their efforts in the sale and distribution of more dangerous drugs, as has happened in other states that have legalized cannabis for recreational use.² This is assuredly why a large majority of states have still not moved to legalize marijuana.

Not only would efforts to legalize marijuana undermine the rule of law and federal law enforcement, it is also harmful to families. Legalizing recreational use of marijuana, even if limited to adults, will likely expose more children to drug use at young impressionable ages. Marijuana is often the “gateway” drug, and its legalization will increase experimentation with it and other drugs. Surely, we can all agree that facilitating more Virginians trying and using addictive, behavior-altering, recreational drugs is not good for individuals or the Commonwealth as a whole.

¹ Drug Enforcement Agency; Denial of Petition To Initiate Proceedings To Reschedule Marijuana; 81 Fed. Reg. 53687 (08/12/2016) <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/08/12/2016-17954/denial-of-petition-to-initiate-proceedings-to-reschedule-marijuana>

²Sally Mamdooh, *Cartels cashing in on Colorado's pot industry*, The Denver Channel, <https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/marijuana/mexican-drug-cartels-are-taking-full-advantage-of-colorados-marijuana-laws>

Beyond undermining federal law and the family, legalizing recreational use of marijuana is not a sound policy for generating revenue for the Commonwealth. According to Smart Approaches to Marijuana, many states that have legalized recreational use of marijuana have not experienced the increase in revenues they anticipated. For example, in Colorado it is estimated that the cost of every dollar of revenue raised by taxing marijuana is \$4.50.³ Further, in Massachusetts the first year of revenue generated following the legalization of recreational marijuana was less than half of the \$63 million they had anticipated.⁴

Virginia should not undermine the rule of law, contribute to more Virginians using recreational drugs, place further unnecessary strain on families who want their children to grow up in a drug free environment, or enter a new business venture for which the many negative consequences far outweigh any potential positive revenue for the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Good". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Congressman Bob Good (VA-05)

³ *Revenues vs reality*, Smart Approaches to Marijuana, <https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Revenues-vs-Reality-0520-4.pdf>

⁴ Kevork Djansezian, *Cannabis was supposed to be a tax windfall for states. The reality has been different.*, Politico, <https://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2019/10/14/marijuana-tax-revenue-001062/>