



American Society of Addiction Medicine

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TREAT ADDICTION • SAVE LIVES

August 12, 2013

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The Honorable Chuck Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Leahy,

Thank you for considering the March 3, 2013 letter from Save Our Society from Drugs, regarding the enforcement of federal laws governing the cultivation, distribution and sale of marijuana. Specifically, the letter asked that the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary encourage Attorney General Eric Holder to enforce these elements of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), during the March 6 hearing on "Oversight of the U.S. Department of Justice."

I, as Acting President of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), was one of the many signatories. While ASAM supports the enforcement of federal laws that discourage the growth and distribution of marijuana, it was not our intention to encourage the criminalization of those individuals dependent on or addicted to marijuana. We would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on ASAM position in this regard.

ASAM's Public Policy Statement on Marijuana very clearly states, "Marijuana dependent persons, like other drug dependent people, should be offered treatment rather than punishment for their illness." Furthermore, in our more recent white paper, "State Level Proposals to Legalize Marijuana," ASAM suggests that, "given the significant role the criminal justice system plays in discouraging marijuana use, states [should] promote programs that enhance linkages between the criminal justice system and the addiction treatment system, using models such as Drug Courts and HOPE Probation."

Given the adverse health consequences associated with marijuana use, and in particular, its addiction potential, ASAM believes it is not in the interest of public health to make marijuana more widely available and more acceptable. To that end, we do not support laws that legalize marijuana. However, ASAM also recognizes that individuals who use

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marijuana may become dependent on the drug and require treatment to overcome this dependency. Treatment, not incarceration, is the best alternative for these people.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and, please, reach out to ASAM should you require further clarity on ASAM's public policy positions or our expertise in addiction-related matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Gitlow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "G".

Stuart Gitlow, MD, MBA, MPH, FAPA
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine