



November 30, 2020

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Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Hoyer, Whip Scalise, Chair Nadler, and Ranking Member Jordan,

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), a national medical specialty society representing more than 6,200 physicians and associated health professionals who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, I write to you regarding a possible, future U.S. House vote on the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act of 2019. As you know, the MORE Act would, among other things, completely remove cannabis from the list of scheduled substances under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). While ASAM strongly opposes that aspect of the MORE Act, ASAM stands ready to work with you and other stakeholders to pass comprehensive federal legislation that would end the United States' historically punitive approach to prohibiting cannabis use while striking a more appropriate balance between federal and state regulation.

On October 10, 2020, ASAM called for a more scientifically informed and compassionate approach to cannabis policy when it adopted its [Public Policy Statement on Cannabis](#). That policy statement contains recommendations that would protect public health and mitigate the risks of cannabis use. For example, ASAM's new recommendations regarding cannabis used for medical purposes underscore that such use should mirror the standards of medicine that apply to other therapeutic interventions – standards related to scientific evidence and oversight by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). To that end, ASAM recommends that cannabis used for medical purposes be rescheduled from Schedule 1 of the CSA to promote more clinical research and FDA oversight.

With respect to cannabis used for non-medical purposes, ASAM's recommendations stress that public health be the end goal of cannabis policy. While ASAM recognizes there would be a public health benefit to decriminalizing cannabis possession and use, due to the known harms of arrest and incarceration, ASAM also recognizes that a regulatory framework to mitigate the verified risks of cannabis use needs to be implemented at the same time. Specifically, ASAM recommends that cannabis possession and use be decriminalized, and authorities offer automatic expungement for past minor cannabis-related convictions, so that hundreds of thousands of people – disproportionately people of color – do not

remain marginalized for prior offenses. In contrast to the MORE Act, however, ASAM recommends federal legislation that would give the federal government a more prominent role in the regulation of cannabis to ensure that states that do legalize cannabis do so utilizing models other than commercialization. The history of major multinational corporations using aggressive marketing strategies to increase and sustain tobacco and alcohol use illustrates the risks of corporate domination of a legalized cannabis market. To reduce those risks, ASAM recommends that Congress ultimately pass federal legislation that would amend the CSA to provide that – as long as states and tribes comply with substantial public health protections– CSA provisions would no longer apply to any person acting in compliance with state or tribal cannabis laws relating to the manufacture, production, possession, distribution, dispensation, administration, or delivery of cannabis for non-medical purposes.

For these reasons, ASAM opposes the passage of the MORE Act, as currently written. Instead, as addiction specialists, we welcome the opportunity to work with you and others toward more comprehensive federal legislation that better achieves what we believe is our shared goal—that is a scientifically informed and compassionate approach to cannabis policy in the United States. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, then please do not hesitate to contact Kelly Corredor, ASAM's Chief Advocacy Officer, at kcorredor@asam.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul H Earley M.D." in a cursive style.

Paul Earley, MD, DFASAM
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine