



## **Position Statement: Legalization of Regulated Marijuana\***

**The Quality Consortium (QC) of Suffolk County is a group of 16 not-for-profit substance use disorder prevention and treatment agencies located throughout Suffolk County, New York. The Quality Consortium of Suffolk County is a partnership of organizations dedicated to the delivery of comprehensive, affordable, and accessible substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery services.**

Given the current national movement towards the legalization of regulated adult use marijuana, which ultimately means **commercialization with for-profit entities**, and the related costs and consequences in states that have legalized marijuana for regulated adult use, we implore Governor Andrew Cuomo to consider the following:

- New York State should take a thoughtful and measured approach, and not rush to legalization before doing due diligence. Due diligence includes vigorous scientific research on secondary health considerations; diversion, lung disease, implications from vaping, impaired driving and mental illness.
- More research needs to be done on the impact of cannabis use on driving, motor vehicle collisions and traffic injuries and fatalities. For example, the fatal crashes with individuals testing positive for marijuana from 2013 – 2015 rose by 88% in Colorado. (*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)*)
- Since Colorado, Oregon, Alaska and DC legalized marijuana, past-month use of the drug has continued to rise above the national average among youth aged 12-17 in all five jurisdictions. (*NSDUH 2006-2017*)
- NYS Department of Health has done an admirable job of minimizing diversion and illegal distribution of medical marijuana. We recommend tightly regulated dispensaries for regulated adult use; consider a model which restricts the sale of marijuana to state operated entities.
- We strongly recommend NO edible products be allowed; but if there are:
  - Marijuana products should be sold only in childproof packaging and be accompanied by mandatory distribution of educational flyers regarding the risks plus clear and appropriate packaging, including potency and percentages of THC content, including serving sizes for edible products.
- NYS must ensure prohibition of marketing and advertising to youth under the age of 21.
- Discourage use among vulnerable populations, especially adolescents, persons with mental illness, and persons with pre-existing substance use disorders, including opiate use disorder (OUD). There are no studies that demonstrate that marijuana has a therapeutic purpose in OUD.
- Earmark taxes placed on marijuana and marijuana sales, wholesale or resale, such that a majority of tax revenues are required to be devoted to prevention, treatment and recovery of substance use disorders.

**We offer these recommendations in light of the considerable expertise of our QC members who have been providing prevention, treatment and recovery services for decades.**

\*References: American Psychiatric Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Smart Approaches to Marijuana, New York State Department of Health