



Working to Reform Marijuana Laws

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**Testimony of Carly Wolf**  
**State Policies Coordinator, National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)**  
**to the House Committee on Commerce and Gaming**  
**in Opposition to House Bill 1463, to limit THC concentration in marijuana products**  
**to 30 percent**  
**February 12, 2021**

I wish to thank the Chair and members of the Committee for considering my testimony.

My name is Carly Wolf, State Policies Coordinator with The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) – a Washington, DC based advocacy organization that opines in favor of evidence-based marijuana policy reforms.

I am providing testimony in opposition to the passage of House Bill 1463, which would limit the THC concentration in marijuana products to 30 percent. NORML strongly opposes this arbitrary cap on THC products.

Although the bill fails to cite specific studies or examples, it alludes to “research” which alleges that the consumption of high-potency marijuana products is directly linked to psychosis. Several studies and review papers, including a 2019 review of the relevant literature published in the journal *Current Psychiatry Reports*, dispute claims of a causal link. Authors of this recent paper conclude: “The evidence for cannabis acting as a causal factor in schizophrenia has so far not been established. ... Overall, we still have insufficient information and knowledge about who is at risk of developing cannabis psychosis prior to cannabis exposure to reliably produce a public health prevention strategy.”<sup>1</sup>

The results of a 2019 study assessing the relationship between psychotic-like experiences and cannabis use in a representative sample of over 1,500 younger subjects determined that initially identified associations between cannabis use and psychosis were no longer present once researchers controlled for confounding variables, such as socioeconomic status, alcohol use, tobacco smoking, and comorbid psychopathology. Authors concluded, “In this study, it was found that after controlling for the effect of the multiple relevant co-variables, the use of cannabis was not related to the frequency and distress associated with psychotic experiences reported by adolescents. ... These results suggest that the relationships established between psychotic-like experiences and cannabis are complex and mediated by relevant variables.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6546656/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31017998/>



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In fact, studies previously examining whether or not increases in cannabis use by the general population parallel similar upticks in cases of schizophrenia and psychosis have failed to identify such a relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Fifteen states regulate adult use cannabis access; virtually none of these impose similar restrictions to what is being proposed in Washington state. That is because such a cap is arbitrary and is not in the best interest of consumers who deserve the legal option to access varying strains of cannabis of varying potencies. Further, imposing such a blanket ban on these higher-potency products will not eliminate demand for said products, but it will succeed in driving this market underground -- making it unregulated and unsafe.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of its potency or how it is consumed, marijuana cannot cause lethal overdose -- unlike alcohol and many other controlled substances. Furthermore, most consumers titrate their cannabis consumption -- consuming lesser quantities of higher-potency products, just as consumers of alcohol ingest lesser quantities of (higher-potency) liquor than (lower-potency) beer. Finally, it should be acknowledged that voters never considered such a potency cap when they enthusiastically legalized marijuana in 2012, nor have they expressed interest in one in the years since.

For these reasons, I urge members of the Committee to oppose the passage of HB 1463.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19560900/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://norml.org/marijuana/library/cannabis-mental-health-and-context-the-case-for-regulation/>