

PRESS RELEASE

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AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSES MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION; SUPPORTS HEALTH-FIRST APPROACH TO MARIJUANA USE

Largest medical group in the US explicitly rejects calls to become "neutral" on legalization; supports full funding of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; calls for proper study of Colorado and Washington policies. It joins the American Psychiatric Association, who issued a statement last week outlining the public health harms of marijuana.

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD-The delegates at the 2013 Interim Meeting of the American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates, in National Harbor, Maryland, today voted to pass a resolution on marijuana, "[Council of Science & Public Health Report 2 in Reference Committee K,](#)" explicitly opposing marijuana legalization - fending off a challenge to "neutralize" their position. The report changes H-95.998 AMA Policy Statement on Cannabis to read in part that: "*Our AMA believes that (1) cannabis is a dangerous drug and as such is a public health concern; (2) sale and possession of cannabis should not be legalized.*"

"The AMA today reiterated the widely held scientific view that marijuana is dangerous and should not be legalized," commented Dr. Stuart Gitlow, Chair-Elect of the AMA Council on Science and Health and SAM Board Member. "We can only hope that the public will listen to science - not 'Big Marijuana' interests who stand to gain millions of dollars from increased addiction rates."

Additionally, the report called for several provisions consistent with Project SAM's marijuana pillars, including efforts to "discourage cannabis use, especially by persons vulnerable to the drug's effects and in high-risk situations...support the determination of the consequences of long-term cannabis use through concentrated research, especially among youth and adolescents... support the modification of state and federal laws to emphasize public health based strategies to address and reduce cannabis use."

"The American Medical Association took a bold step today, and they should be commended," commented former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy, SAM's co-founder. "By explicitly rejecting calls to neutralize their anti-legalization position, they are sending a loud and powerful message to state and local decision makers, the Federal government, and the general public that to be on the side of science is to oppose efforts to expand marijuana use and addiction."

Furthermore, several other elements in the report are consistent with SAM's pillars, including calls to support: "the availability and reduc[tion] (of) the cost of treatment programs for substance use disorders...a coordinated approach to adolescent drug education...community-based prevention programs for youth at risk to fund the Office of National Drug Control Policy... greater protection against discrimination in the employment and provision of services to drug abusers." The report sums up much of these policy initiatives as a public health approach to marijuana use, which SAM wholeheartedly supports.

The AMA report follows an American Psychiatric Association position paper released last week, which concluded: "There is no current scientific evidence that marijuana is in any way beneficial for the treatment of any psychiatric disorder. In contrast, current evidence supports, at minimum, a strong association of cannabis use with the onset of psychiatric disorders. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to harm, given the effects of cannabis on neurological development."

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[About Project SAM \(Smart Approaches to Marijuana\)](#)

[Project SAM is a nonpartisan alliance of lawmakers, scientists and other concerned citizens who want to move beyond simplistic discussions of "incarceration versus legalization" when discussing marijuana use and instead focus on practical changes in marijuana policy that neither demonizes users nor legalizes the drug. SAM supports a treatment, health-first marijuana policy.](#)

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