



# DenverDA

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John Hogenmuller, Executive Director  
Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association  
107 West Gaines Street, Suite L-066  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

Dear Mr. Hogenmuller,

As you know, Colorado legalized small amounts of marijuana for medical use several years ago and then approved a measure allowing retail marijuana for personal use in January 2014, just about seven months ago. While the full impact may not be known for some time, we already are seeing some of the effects. This includes seeing retail marijuana explode into a multi-million dollar industry that exists simultaneously with a continuing black market. Recent findings from the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area give us a snapshot of what is happening, and it is concerning.

We now have nearly 500 medical marijuana dispensaries in Colorado, and 212 retail stores. Most are in Denver (215 medical marijuana dispensaries and 77 retail stores). There are also hundreds of cultivation facilities and dozens of infused marijuana product businesses.

While pro-marijuana groups are touting selected statistics to the media suggesting that crime is down since the legalization of marijuana, we are beginning to see the effects in our emergency rooms, junior and senior high schools, on our roadways and in our homes.

Since 2007, there have been 15 violent deaths related to just medical marijuana in Colorado. In each of these deaths, the victim was a medical marijuana caregiver, was killed in the presence of a caregiver or was trying to rob a caregiver. Dispensaries and stores are lucrative targets for burglaries and robberies. The large sums of cash at these sites have led to execution-style murders and shootouts in residential neighborhoods. There have also been more than 300 burglaries and 7 armed robberies in Denver in the last two years; I do not expect the figures this year to improve.

From 2011 to 2013, there was a 57-percent increase in emergency room visits related to marijuana, and ER doctors noted they treated more small children for accidental overdoses of marijuana. Children are also being exposed when mothers use pot during pregnancy or breastfeeding, as an increasing number of women now report they are trying marijuana for morning sickness or other uses while pregnant. There has also been an increase in calls to our local poison control center involving marijuana and children.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports marijuana use among high school seniors is increasing and may soon become more common than cigarette smoking. This may be connected to the increase we are seeing in the number of adults who encourage marijuana use among young people and adults who are actually using marijuana with a minor. There was a 26-percent increase in monthly marijuana use in

Colorado among young people, ages 12-17, in the three years after medical marijuana was commercialized (2009) compared to the three years prior to commercialization.

There was a 32-percent increase in drug-related suspensions and expulsions in Colorado for academic school years 2008/2009 to 2012/2013. A June 2014 Rocky Mountain HIDTA survey of 100 Colorado school resources officers revealed 89-percent have seen an increase in student marijuana-related incidents since retail marijuana was legalized. And, it appears there is a greater likelihood of young people trying marijuana. A study found that 10-percent of high school students who would otherwise be at low risk for habitual pot smoking now say that they *would* use marijuana if it were legal. It is not my intent in this letter to discuss the health impacts of marijuana on young adults, such as lowered IQ and memory impairment, but there is clearly cause for concern.

We have seen a sharp increase in dangerous hash oil explosions. In the first six months of 2014 there have been 26 confirmed explosions and 27 reported injuries. The number of confirmed explosions directly related to the illegal processing and extraction of hash oil in just six months is more than double the total reported in all of last year.

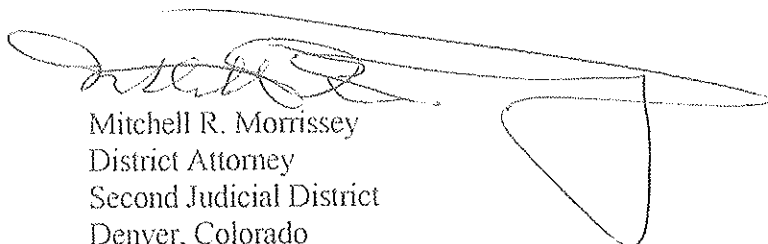
And we have seen an impact on our roads. One in nine drivers in fatal crashes now test positive for marijuana. While the overall number of car crash fatalities were down in Colorado between 2007 and 2012 (down by 14%), fatalities involving drivers who test positive for marijuana are up 100%.

The Colorado State Patrol DUID program (Driving Under the Influence of Drugs), initiated in 2014, show in the first six months of 2014 that 77% of the 454 DUIDs involved marijuana and 42% of the 454 DUIDs involved marijuana only. I do not expect this to improve as another study from 2013 shows marijuana causes more car accidents than any other illicit drug.

The advent of medical marijuana and retail marijuana has not, unfortunately, eliminated the illegal cultivation, possession and sale of marijuana. There remains a robust black market that carries all the risk of illegal drug dealing and continues to require significant public safety resources. Our Crime Lab has requested an additional forensic scientist just to test the volume of marijuana seized over the legal limit.

I believe when the majority of people in Colorado voted to approve Amendment 64, their intention was to de-criminalize the private, personal use of marijuana by adults and that they had no idea marijuana would become the latest multi-million dollar industry in our state. I also believe they did not anticipate the impacts I've outlined in this letter. We will see what the rest of year holds and what other unintended consequences we discover.

Sincerely,



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