

OPEN LETTER TO THE MV COMMUNITY

In November of 2016, Massachusetts voters passed Question 4, officially legalizing recreational marijuana for individuals 21 years of age or older. The law went into effect on December 15, 2016, however, the commercial market is not yet up and running. Our community has participated in recent forums regarding the use of medical cannabis, engaged physicians to registered with the Medical Marijuana Program in the state Department of Public Health and featured newspaper articles on opportunities associated with the business of recreational use.

As a group of individuals who care about the health of our community, we too know the benefits of cannabis. In fact, in 1986, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued a Final Rule and Statement of Policy authorizing the medical use of dronabinol (Marinol®), the main THC isomer found in cannabis, for certain indications. Most of us come from backgrounds where we have seen first-hand how medical marijuana is beneficial in patients with anorexia, HIV/AIDS and cancer.

Despite the potential benefits and legality of marijuana, a balanced discussion about marijuana, review of all the facts associated with its recreational use and the harmful effects of on the young and developing brain is overdue. We want our community to know that the development of the brain is significantly altered when marijuana smoking has become part of a young person's daily routine. Studies show that marijuana interferes with attention, motivation, memory and learning. Students who use marijuana regularly tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school than those who don't use. Those who use regularly maybe functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all the time.

Our community needs an open, informative forum to promote education, dispel myths, review the mounting impact of escalating marijuana use on our youth from education leaders, coaches and health care professionals from our community.

Our coalition is made of members who care about this community, our children and our families. We are planning educational sessions/seminars. Our intent is not to ban marijuana but rather one of awareness and education. We hope you all will embrace our message as an opportunity to become educated about marijuana use and abuse. **Our campaign is one of awareness.** The use of marijuana cannot be portrayed as a casual activity... it could have disastrous results on families and people we care about.