



WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

February 26, 2019

Senate Committee on Business and General Government
sbgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov
Re: SB 639

Dear Senate Committee:

On behalf of Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer comment in response to senate bill 639, which would allow consumption and sale of marijuana items at temporary events as well as regulation by commission of consumption and sale of marijuana items at cannabis lounges, including licensure of premises where cannabis lounges are located.

The Oregon Indoor Clean Air Act (ICAA) protects the public from the risks of exposure to second hand smoke of any kind, including tobacco and marijuana in indoor spaces. Marijuana smoke still contains many of the same carcinogens found in tobacco smoke and there is no safe level of exposure. Senate bill 639 weakens the ICAA by proposing to legalize consumption in both indoor and outdoor spaces and inadvertently opens the door to other industries seeking exemptions.

There have been no studies that have determined the benefits or potential harms, leaving too many unanswered questions when it comes to legalizing public consumption of marijuana. For example, driving under the influence causes injury and potential death to Oregonians. Furthermore, the addition of cannabis cafes creates an increased risk as there are no assessments to measure when an individual is "too high" to drive and no set guidelines to determine when someone should no longer be served.

Another concern is the normalization of marijuana use and the effects it can have on our young people. Since 2012 the Oregon Student Wellness Survey¹ has shown a steady decrease among youth in their perceived risk of use of marijuana. This is also an equity issue in that historically marijuana retailers have been zoned in areas where there are health disparities among low income and minority populations. Therefore youth living in these areas have more exposure to marijuana use and advertising. The normalization of marijuana retailers combined with the presence of marijuana at events and cafes throughout communities could continue to decrease youth perception of harm associated with marijuana use, potentially increasing youth usage.

It is the responsibility of all Oregonians to create safe and healthy environments where all our community members can thrive. To continue to protect the health of the public, Washington County opposes SB 639. Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

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Health and Human Services Director

¹ Oregon Health Authority. 2018 Oregon Student Wellness Survey. Retrieved from <https://oregon.pridesurveys.com/>