



An Open Letter on Cannabis Legalization

Dear Policymaker, Lawmaker or Public Health Director

My name is Dr Karen Randall. I am a physician. I work in an emergency department in Colorado, USA. I am trained in paediatrics, emergency medicine and family practice. I am also certified in cannabis science and medicine. I have been a resident of Colorado since 2013, around the time that state, being the first to, fully legalise cannabis.

Many and various cannabis lobby groups, within and outside of government were working tirelessly to advocate for legalization, as they are now so doing in your states and territories. They do this whilst ignoring, hiding or downplaying clear and emerging harms and simultaneously promoting 'economic benefits' from a commercialised addiction for profit industry. My state and the people who reside here were promised that harms would be minimized, children would be protected and that there would be a vast revenue stream available to the public - none of these have happened.

With many cannabis industry and other protagonists perpetually lobbying policy makers and politicians for the support of their substance, it becomes increasingly important to have the voice of public health and community well-being heard; to be given at the very least, the same opportunity to present the case against this deeply concerning public health unravelling product.

What I experienced in my public health roll is nothing short of catastrophic. I have been a firsthand witness to the devastating harms that cannabis - most notably high potency - has brought to my community. Our county commissioner once labeled Pueblo as the "Napa Valley of Cannabis" and promised the community so many benefits from the tax revenue.

Not surprisingly, the tax benefits never materialized and our community has suffered. The most troubling aspect of all this is that children are constantly exposed to cannabis - it is literally everywhere in their environment – which is in complete breach of [Article 33 or UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Even though 'safeguards' were promised and then remedial work attempted, it is not working. In my state, children can obtain product in less than a few hours (some even get it from dispensaries - as they sell excess product out their back doors). Sadly, Colorado ranks 5th from the bottom with regards to mental health and addiction beds per capita. Once these kids get addicted, there is minimal treatment options.

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Our community is a community of color and primarily blue collar. These parents and family members do not have the resources to get expensive/ private substance abuse treatment. We often must send children back to the same environment they came from with little hope of treating their addictions. Sometimes, we have held children in the emergency department waiting literally weeks for a treatment bed to open up for them.

We must get control of this and legalizing more addictive substances is not the answer.

I could list case after case of children I have seen that have been affected - and for a good percentage of these children - they will have lifelong issues with addiction, substance abuse and all that entails. The youngest acutely psychotic, chronic cannabis user that I have seen was just 7. You need to know that there are no acute detox beds for children/adolescents in the state south of Colorado Springs - so, for half of the state.

Many pro-cannabis lobby groups invite you to discuss, even visit with their curated production outfits and stores and pro-cannabis bureaucrats furnish you with cherry-picked or even fallacious data. The 'courting' of consent for the legally protected promotion of another psychotropic toxin into the public square is frankly, heinous.

What I would like to do for you, as I've done both in both my state and at national levels in my country, is to invite you and/or your team to spend a day with me in the emergency ward before you continue to pass or encourage more laws on making cannabis even more accessible.

I am asking that you to come and see the end point of legalization as I see it every single day in the emergency department.

Thank you for your time,

Dr. Karen Randall, FAAEM
Certified in Cannabis Science and Medicine.

(International Member of Dalgarno Institute [D.A.R.Think Tank](#))

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