

# The Detroit News

## Opponents speak out against Mich. pot legalization proposal

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Kevin Sabet, president of Wash. D.C.-based Smart Approaches to Marijuana, argues against legalizing marijuana in Michigan through Proposal 1 John T. Greilick, The Detroit News *(Photo: John T. Greilick, Detroit News)*

Advocacy groups and community leaders are voicing their opposition to a measure on the ballot in November's general election that asks Michigan voters to decide on legalizing recreational marijuana use.

Proposal 1 "supports the very issues that are harming our neighborhoods and killing our families," said Kamilia Landrum, deputy executive director of the [Detroit Branch NAACP](#). "Legalizing marijuana does not help our education system. ... It would not provide more jobs, it would take them away. It does not lead to better health care. It puts our health in danger."

She and other officials spoke out against the proposal during a news conference Tuesday in Detroit led by [Healthy and Productive Michigan](#), a committee working to defeat the measure at the ballot box.

Those involved argue that passing the proposal could lead to more crime while failing to offer solutions to social justice issues as supporters claim.

"It doesn't address expungements, incarcerations," said Monica Anthony, a consultant with Healthy and Productive Michigan. "It doesn't address the employees and how they'll be impacted."

Proponents say it would align with a new, strong regulatory system for emerging medical marijuana businesses in the state and add roughly millions annually in tax revenue, specifically for road repairs, schools and municipalities.

The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol recently announced that the nonpartisan Michigan Senate Fiscal Agency [estimates Proposal 1 would generate](#) \$105.6 million from sales tax and \$182.3 million in excise tax in 2023.

Kevin Sabet, president and CEO of [Smart Approaches to Marijuana](#), a bipartisan alliance addressing policies on the drug, argues those gains could be dwarfed by costs associated with traffic accidents, lost workplace productivity and health issues.

He also cited provisions allowing a possession limit of 2.5 ounces that is higher than many other states.

As for products, “there are no limits on potency,” said Sabet, an author, consultant, former adviser to three U.S. presidential administrations. “.... It’s really a poorly written initiative.”

The Rev. Horace Sheffield, who represented the [Detroit Association of Black Organizations](#) and said he was once an addict, feared the effect on young people.

“This further imperils our youth who already are economically disadvantaged. It also stymies their educational pursuits,” he said. “... This is not a drug that should be legal.”

Healthy and Productive Michigan has said 73 county sheriffs, 56 county prosecutors, the Michigan Catholic Conference Board of Directors and the Michigan State Medical Society support defeating the proposal. As opponents spread their message through robocalls, billboards and other means, public support for the measure remains high.

In Michigan, surveys have shown that the public's receptiveness to marijuana legalization tracks similarly with nationwide polling that finds about 60 percent support, according to Gallup and the Pew Research Center. A recent Detroit News-WDIV survey of 600 likely voters showed 62 percent [embraced it](#). The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Meanwhile, [Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol](#) officials say the proposal would create a state-regulated system of licensed businesses dedicated to the drug.

“Our goal is to regulate business and make sure the black market is decimated and we take marijuana off the streets,” said Josh Hovey, a spokesman for the group. “We think this proposal is a smart use of tax dollars in terms of redirecting law enforcement resources. ... It’s going to stop denying people future opportunities for education and employment just because they have a petty possession charge.”

He argues that the measure does not allow the drug to be used openly and publicly. Addressing critics’ assertions about higher crime, Hovey pointed to Washington State University researchers, this year finding that marijuana legalization in Colorado and Washington [did not hurt police effectiveness](#), and clearance rates for some offenses improved.

“That’s a direct impact on the quality of life in our community,” Hovey said.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/10/24/opponents-speak-out-against-mich-pot-legalization-proposal/1735903002/>