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For Immediate Release
February 18, 2019

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Rep. Sanfelippo Slams Gov. Evers's Plan for Marijuana Decriminalization

Sanfelippo cites overwhelming scientific research on health dangers of marijuana

Madison, Wis. – Governor Tony Evers announced plans to include a proposal in his budget to decriminalize the use of marijuana and legalize it for medical purposes. In response to the Governor's call for relaxing marijuana laws in Wisconsin, Assembly Health Committee Chairman Rep. Joe Sanfelippo (R-New Berlin) came out in strong opposition to the proposal.

“Governor Evers's plan for decriminalizing and legalizing marijuana is both irresponsible and uninformed. This is a case of the Governor advancing his own agenda despite a large body of scientific research demonstrating real dangers associated with marijuana use. Contrary to the growing narrative that marijuana is harmless, the scientific and medical communities have raised genuine concerns about the risks that marijuana consumption poses to health and public safety,” said Sanfelippo.

The American Medical Association's formal position is that cannabis is a dangerous drug. The AMA is opposed to the legalization and sale of marijuana, and the AMA further discourages its use. Moreover, the World Health Organization has also identified many short- and long-term health effects of marijuana use. In the near-term, the WHO finds that marijuana affects learning and memory, while also inhibiting users' ability to operate complex machines, increasing the risk of car accidents for 24 hours after consuming marijuana. The WHO further identifies long-term risks of marijuana use, such as permanent mental impairment, exacerbation of schizophrenia, as well as throat and lung damage among smokers.

Similarly, the American Psychological Association has found risks to developing brains among adolescent users of marijuana. It identified a roughly 6-point drop in IQ among persistent adolescent users, even accounting for educational differences, comparable to the effects of lead exposure.

“We rightly expend considerable resources preventing lead exposure in our communities. To willfully risk creating a public health hazard of the same magnitude to score cheap political points is wrong and irresponsible,” Sanfelippo argued.

There is also a severe risk of birth defects associated with marijuana use among pregnant women; specifically, it leads to issues with fetal development and low birth weight. Consequently, the AMA, WHO, and Centers for Disease Control all recommend that pregnant and breastfeeding mothers avoid marijuana use.

“The Governor should not be rushing into promoting marijuana for medical use in Wisconsin when the science does not support his position. While research has identified some limited cases where cannabis has medical utility, the evidence shows that those therapeutic benefits come from cannabidiol (“CBD”), not tetrahydrocannabinol (“THC”), which is the active ingredient in marijuana that gives it its hallucinogenic properties. We've already legalized CBD oil here in Wisconsin last year for medical use. Governor Evers should not be giving patients with serious medical conditions, like chronic pain and epilepsy, false hope that they can get help from drug dealers. The Governor is putting politics ahead of sound science, and that's not how we should set public health policy. I urge Governor Evers to keep politics out of this important issue,” added Sanfelippo.

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The [15th Assembly District](#) includes most of West Allis and the Northern half of New Berlin.