Marijuana Harms Youth. Science has proven – and all major scientific and medical organizations agree – that marijuana is both addictive and harmful to the human brain, especially when used as an adolescent.

Marijuana is Addictive. One in every six 16 year-olds (and one in every eleven adults) who try marijuana will become addicted to it. More young people are in treatment for marijuana abuse or dependence than for the use of alcohol and all other drugs.

Marijuana has changed over the past 20 years. The psychoactive ingredient in marijuana—THC—has increased almost six-fold in average potency during the past thirty years.

Marijuana is the #1 drug listed as primary drug for treatment amongst Maine youth 18 and under admitted for substance abuse treatment.
- 56% of 18 and under youth list marijuana as primary drug for treatment, alcohol is second at 27%.
- For 14 year olds and under, 100% of admissions list marijuana as the primary drug for treatment.
- 60% of 18 and under seeking treatment for marijuana are also using alcohol.

Marijuana Threatens Public Safety
Marijuana use, and its impairment of motor coordination and reaction time, doubles the risk of car crashes. In Colorado, Traffic fatalities involving operators testing positive for marijuana have increased 100% from 2007 to 2012.

In Colorado, in one year from 2013 to 2014 when retail marijuana businesses began operating, there was a 167 percent increase in explosions involving THC extraction labs.

Lessons from States who have Legalized Recreational Use
In 2006, Colorado was ranked 14th in the nation for past 30-day use of marijuana amongst 12-17 year olds. Post-legalization, in 2013, they were ranked #3. Use amongst 12-17 year olds increased 6.6% between 2012 and 2013 after Colorado legalized. (Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health)
Increased Access = Lower Perception of Risk = Higher Use
Over 30 years of national data shows a strong link between perception of risk and prevalence of marijuana use amongst youth. When perception of risk falls, use rises. This pattern has held without fail since 1975. In Maine, perception of risk is falling amongst high school youth. Percentage of high school youth who believe regular use of marijuana was risky for health has fallen from 60.9% in 2009 and 48.4% in 2013.

Marijuana Use Keeps Teens From Doing Their Best
Studies indicate that problems with attention, learning, memory and processing speeds can be associated with heavy marijuana use during adolescence. vi

Marijuana use in teens is linked to lower academic performance and reduced job prospects. vii

Heavy marijuana users experience attention and memory problems which last beyond the time when they are high. Studies indicate these problems can worsen with years of regular use. viii

Marijuana Burdens the Economy with Increased Health and Social Costs
Most recent cost report shows substance abuse costs the state of Maine over $1.4 Billion, amounting to $1,057 for every resident of Maine.ix This includes costs associated with healthcare and lower worker productivity. Increasing access and use of marijuana will increase these costs.

In Colorado, from 2011 to 2013 there was a 57% increase in emergency room visits related to marijuana. Hospitalizations related to marijuana have increased by 82% from 2008 to 2013.x

In Colorado, marijuana-related exposures to children ages 0 to 5 went from just 4 in 2006 to 38 in 2014, a 950% increase.xi


The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact Volume 2, Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, August 2014.

Ibid