

Cannabis Legalization: A Tale of Two States



At the March Hc3 meeting, we compared Colorado's experience with Cannabis legalization with NY's proposed "Regulation and Taxation Act." Drawing from Sam Cort's book *Weed, Inc.*, we saw what happens when there is virtually no regulation over what's produced or sold, or where. **Here are some facts and recommendations from Colorado:**



- Dispensaries in Colorado are promoting ultra-potent THC "wax" or "dab," rather than just "weed."
- There are more dispensaries in Denver than there are McDonald's and Starbucks combined, concentrated in low-income, minority neighborhoods. Almost all are owned by corporations run by rich white guys.
- Arrests of minority youth for cannabis infractions are up 47-58% (they're down by 8% for white youth).
- The Cannabis industry and its lobbyists have blocked most regulations. They basically run the show.
- There are no environmental safeguards such as on pesticide use, location of growing facilities, water and energy usage, or production of greenhouse gases, estimated at 4600 kilos of Co2 for each kilo of weed produced.
- Forty percent of sales are of edibles. One "serving" is limited to 10 mg of THC, but there is no limit on how many servings one item may contain. One brand of soda has 350mg/bottle, and some candies contain ten or more servings. Try drinking one-thirty-fifth of a bottle of pop or eating one-tenth of a gummy bear. Caveat Emptor.

Recommendations from the Wild West for states considering legalization:

- Keep out the Corporations. They're already paying your legislators to do their bidding.
- Have sound data before you start: usage by age and demographics, DUIs, ED admissions, etc.
- Put strong regulations in effect, such as outlet placement and density (allowing for local control).
- Limit advertising and legal distancing of signs and dispensaries from schools and other such places.
- Include ban on smoking weed in all non-smoking areas.
- Limit the potency of concentrates. These are hard drugs.
- Require opaque, child-proof packaging for edibles – no cartoon dancing bears, please.
- Train more Drug Recognition Experts – there is no breathalyzer for weed, establishing level of impairment is the only way of establishing a DUI.
- Dedicate a lot of revenue to education, prevention, treatment and recovery.

What's in New York State's Proposed Legislation?

- Considerations for Granting Licenses (for dispensaries, grow facilities, production, and distribution):
 - Proximity to schools, other licensees, playgrounds, etc.
 - Ability to mitigate environmental impacts – water, energy, emissions,
 - Impact on pedestrians, traffic, noise...
 - Limit on number and type of licenses. One can only be a grower, processor, distributor, or retailer.
 - Support for businesses run by women, disadvantaged minorities and farmers, service-disabled vets.
- Regulations on packaging, labeling, serving size (1 serving/item), laboratory testing, cultivation and processing, and sales (hours, locations, potency, products offered, pricing...).
- Local control: Referendum required to completely opt out.

There is a **lot** more to learn about this legislation. I suggest skimming the Senate bill (same as the Assembly's) for yourself: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S854> and if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, contact your state representatives **very soon**. The bill is likely to pass by June 1st.

Next Hc3 meeting is Wednesday, April 21st at 1 pm. For the link to join us, contact Rob Levy: rlevy@geneseo.edu

The Geneseo Healthy Campus and Community Coalition (Hc3) is a partnership between all sectors of the college, village and town, including college faculty, staff and students, community members and other stakeholders. Our purpose is to work together to reduce high-risk alcohol and other drug use, and to create a connected, healthy and inclusive community.