

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Report Calls for Federal Public Health Leadership on Cannabis Policy**

A new report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine finds that the disconnect between federal and state governments has complicated efforts to develop cannabis policies that protect public health. The report calls for federal public health leadership on cannabis policy. More than half of all U.S. states have legalized some form of cannabis, while the federal government still considers most types of cannabis illegal. According to the report, the disconnect between state and federal government regarding marijuana is leading to fragmented policies and risks to the public.

Cannabis use is increasing in many populations. Public perception of risk has declined while availability has surged, leading to a near doubling of past-year cannabis use among adults in the last two decades. Notably, more people have reported daily, or near-daily cannabis use than alcohol use in 2022. Cannabis use is socially stratified. Those with a college education have the lowest prevalence of use; additionally, those at or below the poverty line have a higher prevalence of use than those with two times the federal poverty level.

While dried flower remains the most used product, concentrates, edibles, and vape oils are gaining in popularity, with many people using multiple products and administration methods. Moreover, the THC concentration of products consumed today has increased markedly. Understanding of the dynamics of the legal versus illegal cannabis markets is complicated by the lack of precise data on cannabis consumption in the United States. The limited studies that have been conducted suggest a shift toward purchasing cannabis from legal markets. Reduction in the size of the illegal cannabis market is shaped by multiple factors, ranging from the regulatory environment to enforcement activities. Reducing the size of the illegal cannabis market takes time.

According to the report, people consume cannabis more regularly than alcohol in the U.S. The concentration of THC found in many cannabis products can be very potent, which is not always disclosed. Higher concentrations of THC make it more likely for people to take more than they intend to. This has contributed to more traffic accidents and hospital visits related to cannabis use, the report notes.

It is possible to obtain psychoactive hemp products even in states where cannabis is illegal. This is because the 2018 Farm Bill defined a subset of cannabis as hemp and excluded it from the Controlled Substances Act. As a result, there has been a boom in products containing hemp-derived chemicals. The report also found that cannabis can be dangerous, but the public tends to hear less about its risks.

Policy development is critical to minimizing the potential harms of cannabis use and promoting health equity. Cannabis policies can inform cultivation, manufacturing, marketing and sales, and consumption or use, and regulation can bring about both benefits and harms. State policies, coupled with the current ambiguous definition of “hemp” in the 2018 Farm Bill, have led to a largely unregulated market for semisynthetic intoxicating cannabinoids.

The following recommendations were made by report researchers:

- Congress should refine the definition of “hemp” to state clearly that no form of tetrahydrocannabinol or semisynthetic cannabinoid derived from hemp is exempt from the Controlled Substances Act.
- In conjunction with other federal agencies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should conduct research on and develop best practices for protecting public health for states that have legalized cannabis, drawing from tobacco and alcohol policies. These best practices should encompass marketing restrictions (e.g., on advertising and packing), age restrictions, physical retail and retail operating restrictions, taxation, price restrictions, product design, and measures to limit youth access. Other strategies for protecting public health that warrant identification of best practices include reducing cannabis impaired driving, promoting state retail monopoly, and encouraging cultivation practices that limit contamination of both products and the environment. The best practices should be reconsidered and updated periodically as new research emerges.
- The National Governors Association, the National Council of State Legislatures, and other public health stakeholders should develop model legislation concerning best practices related to marketing restrictions (e.g., on advertising and packaging), age restrictions, physical retail and retail operating restrictions, taxation, price restrictions, product design, and measures to limit youth access, as well as strategies for reducing cannabis-impaired driving, promoting state retail monopoly, and encouraging cultivation practices that limit contamination of both products and the environment. Once the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s best practices have been developed, they should be incorporated into the model legislation.

To read the full report please visit <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/download/27766>.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about cannabis use—especially in youth as their brains are developing. The Coalition is conducting a prevention awareness campaign entitled “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE; Underage Marijuana Use,” to educate

and update the community regarding marijuana use and its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about Cannabis/Marijuana use at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).