



January 8, 2019

Cannabis Commission
Elizabeth Greene, Secretary
1947 Center Street, 2nd Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704

Statement of Concern Regarding Increased Cannabis Businesses in Berkeley

As leaders at the University of California, Berkeley, we are writing to express our concern about discussions for a proposed increase of cannabis dispensaries in Berkeley, especially near the university campus.

From a public health as well as a student education and development perspective, we are aware of the impact that the community environment and availability have on student social norms and individual decisions. This is well documented for both alcohol and marijuana. The opening of dispensaries near campus could introduce new products to students who may be particularly vulnerable to marketing and promotion due to their newly-achieved independence, academic stress and social pressures.

This language from the *Model Ordinance* published by Getting it Right from the Start (Silver, L., and Padon, A, 2017; Public Health Institute, Oakland, CA 94607; www.gettingitrightfromthestart.org) is very relevant to our concerns for the college students in our community:

Of particular concern is the impact of legalization on youth below age 25, because research suggests that use among youth carries special risks to the developing brain that are not present for older adults. Legalization should have as a primary goal establishing a legal market while at the same time instituting regulatory structures to prevent or mitigate harm, particularly to youth. Cannabis, like alcohol and tobacco, is an addictive substance that should not be treated as an ordinary commodity in the marketplace.

Our medical and mental health providers, prevention specialists, student development experts, and alcohol/drug counselors are strongly in favor of a harm reduction approach to all drugs, especially cannabis, and support the national movement to decriminalize cannabis in all its forms. However, the alternative to criminalization should not be unfettered and unmanaged availability and access. We support a managed approach to legal cannabis availability in Berkeley, to support the health and wellbeing of the campus community.

We encourage you to thoughtfully consider the concentration of dispensaries in the area and their proximity to campus where tens of thousands of young adults below age 25 live, study and work.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Sutton, Ed.D., Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, UC Berkeley
Catherine P. Koshland, Ph.D, Vice Chancellor, Undergraduate Education, UC Berkeley
Joseph Greenwell, Ed.D., Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students, UC Berkeley
Anna Harte M.D., Medical Director and Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor, UC Berkeley
Walter Wong, University Registrar, UC Berkeley