

# THE STATE OF CANNABIS POLICY IN CALIFORNIA'S CITIES & COUNTIES



Advancing Public Health & Equity in Cannabis Policy

## FACT SHEET

**WHAT:** California cities and counties can now measure how well their cannabis ordinances are protecting youth and supporting social equity in the first five years of legalization. Scorecards summarize the evolution of cannabis policies in the 298 California cities and counties that have opted to permit retail sales, whether through storefronts and/or by delivery, of cannabis.

The scorecards bring light to a patchwork of local policies that continue to mostly fall far short of what public health leaders believe is necessary. In a legal market lacking that more solid foundation, dangerous products and practices, like ultra-high potency grape flavored vapes, billboards everywhere or invisible health warnings in 6-point font, have rapidly become entrenched, leading to growth in cannabis-related health problems.

**WHY:** New data is showing increases in harmful patterns of cannabis use, including a tripling of daily or near daily use by California adults and a near doubling of cannabis use during pregnancy over the past decade. Cannabis-related emergency department visits increased 75% in just four years (2016-2020).

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, cannabis can have severe negative effects on the adolescent brain, including problems with memory and learning, and impaired coordination. Higher potency products are particularly dangerous for youth.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine concluded there was substantial evidence that cannabis use is associated with:

- Low birth weight, if used during pregnancy
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Psychosis and schizophrenia
- Problem use, especially when used at a young age or frequently.

Rates of cannabis-related mental health issues, including psychosis and suicidal ideation, are also climbing. These effects can have a strong impact on community public safety, including increased auto accident rates due to consumers driving under the influence.

To mitigate these issues, cities and counties that choose to legalize retail sales of cannabis should adopt a set of common sense, evidence-based cannabis policies to fulfill our collective responsibility to protect youth and promote social equity.

**WHO:** **Getting it Right from the Start**, a project of the Public Health Institute, works with states, cities, counties and community partners to develop evidence-based model policies and provide guidance on cannabis policies that can help reduce harms, protect against youth and problem cannabis use, and advance social equity.



### Model Ordinances

Developing model local ordinances for licensing cannabis retailers, marketing, and general and special taxes on cannabis.



### Research

Carrying out research with local and national stakeholders and experts to identify best practices.



### Legal Analyses

Developing legal analyses of relevant issues for licensing, constraints on marketing and taxation.



### Technical Resources

Managing a national listserv, providing webinars, presentations, visits and other TA tools that support communities, educating policymakers and sharing experiences.



### Public Health Input

Providing public health-oriented input to regulatory processes and supporting other stakeholders to do so.

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