

## **CANNABIS “NORMALIZATION’ – NON-COMMERCIAL SOCIAL USE**

LONELINESS is painful and becoming ever more common as traditional families, communities, industries, and the middle class disintegrate. It leads to many health problems, physical and mental.

We now have a partial cure available. Let’s have the brains and bravery to use it to help people.

Yes, we legalized cannabis to get freedom and justice, but we also legalized cannabis so that its benefits can be realized to help heal our society.

Cannabis is a social drug that makes people happy, sociable, and joyful with nearly no chance of addiction in the medical sense of that word.

It is everywhere, but there is still stigma.

We are done hiding in our homes. We will create myriad opportunities for safe, enjoyable cannabis socializing, both commercial and non-commercial.

Cannabis is \*legal\*, and Michigan has the nations best law. Let’s start implementing!

Commercial cannabis establishments which allow use will be wildly successful as long as there is no discrimination against them. They must be able to sell cannabis and the full range of food and drink items, except alcohol, along with THC infused “mocktails”.

Regulations that get in the way have to be changed!

### **Non-commercial cannabis socializing could be equally successful.**

Every town has some sort of community center, senior center, park, library or community space where seniors, or people of any age, can get together to enjoy life and each other.

We need to clarify the rationale for non-commercial cannabis socializing, and then figure out a very safe protocol.

Unless you have lived under a rock for decades, you know that cannabis makes people smile and be more friendly. The 1944 “LaGuardia Report“ scientifically studied “marijuana“ users, and found that “they love to smoke in the presence of others“, they show “an extreme willingness to share“, and “readily engage in conversations with strangers”.

In psychological testing, dimensions of “agreeableness“ increased while “aggression“ declined. “Verbal fluency” was enhanced.

The American Journal of Public Health (Dec. 2014) showed a decline in suicide in states that have fully legalized cannabis, ...with an especially great decline in males between 20 and 39 years old.

Even animal studies prove that cannabis “can have a potent anti-depressive effect”.

Out of the University of New Mexico has come a beautiful study called “Cannabis Consumption, and Prosociality”. It measured several basic concepts of social psychology. The results? “Pro social behaviors”, the “empathy quotient”, and “moral fairness” all clearly increased. “Aggression” decreased in males but, in a fascinating twist, increased in females. Marijuana users demonstrated a better understanding of other peoples emotions. The results “highlight positive effects of cannabis on interpersonal relationships, and potential therapeutic applications”.

“Pro social behaviors promote distinct health advantages, greater physical health, happiness, less disease, higher quality of life, lower levels of aggressive behavior or psychotic symptoms and longer average lifespan”.

An article in JAMA “Health Policy” says that cannabis use can lead to “significant and sustained health improvements, especially for people with chronic pain or insomnia”. Side effects were “rarely serious”. The University of Colorado at Boulder has shown that cannabis produces an “enhanced runners high” and less pain during exercise.

I was thrilled by this next study, which shows that my time as a cannabis activist has been well spent.

This result is nearly unbelievable, but it’s pure statistics. A University of Indiana researcher crunched data from the “Uniform Reporting System”, run by SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Services Agency. The result? “ shortly after a state adopts a recreational marijuana law, there is a significant reduction in mental health treatment admissions”. A 37% drop. That is astounding!

This fact should’ve headlined every kind of media, instead it was ignored. This is a “game changing” result, which nothing else could produce... other than a fair, well-managed, and happy society.

Cannabis makes people laugh, and that is good! Sometimes they can’t stop, and that’s OK. THC interacts with the areas of the brain which are involved in mood regulation. Cannabis creates a “reflex to laugh“, even when nothing is especially funny.

Cannabis eases social situations, especially for those with social anxiety. The Roman physician Galen wrote that cannabis would be given to guests at a banquet to “promote hilarity and happiness“. Jamaican Rastafarian poet Sam Brown says “all hail, great ganja, the solvent of gloom“. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus wrote about the warlike Scythians, who would get into a tiny tent in the evening, burn cannabis flowers in a red hot metal bowl, and “howl with joy“.

Professor Lester Grinspoon, from Harvard, says that we all know that “laughter is good, healthy,

positive, and life affirming” and “cannabis has the power to highlight the comical in life and catalyze a deep and salutary laughter”.

As social fragmentation and isolation increase, and families disintegrate, the Surgeon General of the United States has issued a report called “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation”, “The US Surgeon Generals Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community”.

He wrote: “the mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that of smoking 15 cigarettes per day, and greater than that associated with obesity or lack of physical activity”. That is amazing.

Old folks may be alone and isolated even within busy families if other family members never emerge from behind their screens. This is called “proximal separation”, when other family members are not mentally or emotionally present.

For many decades, cannabis users had to isolate themselves to be safe, and it becomes a habit. Now let’s encourage them to get out and “smell the flowers”.

The “loneliness report” says that we should support “community efforts to rebuild social connection”. To effectively diminish loneliness “will require reimagining the structures, policies, and **programs** that shape a community to best support the development of healthy relationships”.

Cannabis can aid weight loss, help regulate diabetes, lower blood pressure, and fight cancer, bowel diseases, Parkinson’s, alcoholism, and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Cannabis can help prevent and can help to manage addiction.

Old people could relax with friends and find new friends, which is critically important when you are old. Having a friend you can call can easily make the difference between life and death.

Dr. Grinspoon says that cannabis helps opiate addicts with pain, anxiety, insomnia, and with withdrawal. His son, Dr. Peter Grinspoon says that cannabis results “almost universally” “in an improved quality of life” and is very helpful with old people “ particularly to help them get off many of the other drugs, the polypharmacy, that they’re afflicted with.”

With dementia cannabis attacks the underlying inflammation, and helps with aggression, confusion, and anxiety.

Ann Arbor voters are the smartest in the nation and quite willing to take the lead when something makes sense. They would be happy to vote for a “ Cannabis Vape Class and Social Night” at the senior center monthly. Possibly a cannabis social evening at the senior center could pass city Council, if it was handled very carefully.

Ann Arbor voters are ready to move into the future and use cannabis wisely, especially if it costs

them nothing.

We will need to perfect this proposal and recruit a committee to nurture and create a “Seniors Cannabis Social Night” at the Ann Arbor senior center.

We may have to concede that we will have no flame or smoke indoors, so we need to find the best tools for vaporizing bud. Is anybody certain that they know the best vaporizer, the easiest and most effective one to use? Yes, you could use “Volcano's”, and rent out clean mouthpieces. We should put massive effort into winning this, because, like anything else, what starts in Ann Arbor can spread to the world. Everywhere on earth there are community buildings, libraries, churches, parks, etc., where safe cannabis socializing can take place.

First Ann Arbor, then everywhere.

What are the main concerns?

1) Supply - we can solve that one, and people with lots can bring extra for others.

2) Regulations? – Cannabis is legal! Let's push that hard, since we made it true! Regulators need to get up to speed.

Will they say we need a permit? I hope not, if they do it better be pretty quick and cheap. We will find the specific rules that try to block us and we will get them changed.

Cannabis is legal! And alcohol is still deadly.

3) Driving home?

We know that legal cannabis use does not involve in any increase in driving death...

Massachusetts saw a 30% decline in road deaths after legalization. After 50 years of experience, we know that experienced cannabis users drive very well, usually more cautiously than before imbibing.

Still, there could be a crash on the way home, and we cannot have any liability accrue to the city or any of us. We could have designated drivers, contracts with Uber, and various agreements.

We can't let this be the dealbreaker, people drive every day after smoking pot, and if they were bad drivers somebody would've noticed by now, and statistics would reflect that.

Inertia is the strongest force. Once we get noncommercial social activities going, they will catch on like a prairie fire... but we need a working template. Ann Arbor voters are ready to support a well thought out effort to create noncommercial social use at our Senior Center.

We need to get our proposal exactly right! Who will help me?

Let's get millions of people around the world legally socializing with cannabis. All different kinds of people! The world will be better because people will be happier.

The world will also be better because all of these people will not be using hard drugs.

The “India Hemp Drug Commission” was very clear in 1896, that, “ without ganja you have the

possibility of driving consumers to have recourse to other stimulants or narcotics, which are more dangerous". This is even more true today.

The astounding drug war book called "Chasing the Scream" clearly proved that "the opposite of addiction is connection". (In this brutally honest book the addicts who are finally able to give up hard drugs says that they are giving up "everything but weed", since they know weed is a medicine that can lead them back to stability.)

We have a mission.

Cannabis cannot exert all its good effects on human civilization until we "normalize" its use.

Most of my family are dead from alcohol. I'm the only one left, so I'm on a mission to provide Safer Alternatives for Enjoyable Recreation...(SAFER).