

To Arizona Clergy:

We are writing you today as fellow clergy in Arizona to ask you to join us in publicly supporting a policy reform grounded in a concern for public health, security, and liberty. This November, [Arizonans will vote on a ballot initiative which will change the laws in the state in order to regulate, tax and control marijuana like alcohol](#). It will limit legal use to adults 21 years of age or older and generate tens of millions of dollars for public schools and education programs annually.

A system of control and regulation makes so much more sense than what we have now. For decades, marijuana prohibition has been inefficient, wasteful, and counterproductive. By all measures, Arizona's marijuana laws have failed. They create unintended consequences that fuel the black market and put young people at risk. Each year, our state spends millions of dollars to arrest adults for possessing marijuana, our police waste precious time enforcing these policies and countless human lives are wasted. Despite all these efforts, about three-quarters of teenagers in national surveys consistently report that marijuana is "fairly or very easy to get."

As clergy, we have the responsibility and the credibility to talk about what policies serve our community best. One does not have to use marijuana – or even approve of marijuana – to see that our current laws are not working, nor are they, in my view, just.

This is a policy reform long overdue. Prohibiting marijuana has created an out-of-control illicit market that undermines public health and safety. In Arizona, taxpayers spend millions of dollars annually to arrest, prosecute, cite and process thousands of people— disproportionately Latinos and African- Americans — for possessing small amounts of marijuana.

As we seek to teach compassion and love, it seems inconsistent to support, in cases of private personal adult marijuana possession, the use of police, guns and courts. The faith community, parents, peers, counselors and educators are the appropriate means to address this kind of personal behavior.

We should work to make our communities safer. Illegal marijuana sales are the foundation for criminal markets that operate in every community in our state. When people, both old and young, seek to purchase marijuana in the underground market, they are often exposed to – and are encouraged to purchase – far more dangerous substances.

We need to break the link between marijuana and more dangerous drugs. And we can do so by shifting sales of marijuana out of the criminal market and into regulated businesses that check ID's for age and generate tax revenue for needed services.

How we punish people and what we punish them for are central moral questions. If a punishment policy fails to meet its objectives and causes harm to humans, we have a moral obligation to support change. Our laws punishing marijuana use continue to cause significant harm to individuals, families and society. In response to that harm, we are supporting replacing marijuana prohibition and the resulting arrest and prosecution with a system of strict regulation and sensible safeguards.

Learn more about this measure, including the fact that [Prop 205 would generate over \\$50 million annually](http://www.regulatemarijuanaaz.org) from taxation of marijuana that will be directed to public schools, at Regulate Marijuana Arizona (<http://www.regulatemarijuanaaz.org>).

Thank you for your leadership and support in this important issue.

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