



Talking Points on Marijuana Decriminalization

1. **Expanded Decriminalization vs. Legalization:**

The legalization of marijuana is the process of removing all legal prohibitions against it. Marijuana would then be available to the adult general population for purchase and use at will, similar to tobacco and alcohol. Decriminalization is the act of removing criminal sanctions against the usage of marijuana. Decriminalization will not deter usage among Hawaii's youth. We must note that marijuana remains illegal under federal law.

2. **Impact on Black Market and Drug Dealers:**

Decriminalization of marijuana does not address the black market and criminal networks of drug selling. All illegal drugs must still be sourced through the black market. This means drugs will remain of unknown strength and purity and potentially be cut with various dangerous and life-threatening fillers.

3. **Health and Safety Concerns:**

Studies continue to show the profound effects of today's potent marijuana on the teenage brain, including permanent IQ loss and increased cannabis use disorder among teens. A 2024 study by the [National Institute of Health](#) found that daily use of cannabis — predominately through smoking — was associated with a 25% increased likelihood of heart attack and a 42% increased likelihood of stroke when compared to non-use of the drug. Without a solid educational component to deter youth usage, Hawaii will see an increase in cannabis-use disorders, unintentional ingestion, and mental health disorders. In addition, marijuana use most likely will affect driving, making our roadways dangerous.

4. **Lack of Safeguards in Decriminalization:**

Decriminalization bills do not have the alleged "safeguards" that, at the very least, were included in the recreational marijuana bill (SB3335). Nor is there any attempt to educate the public on the dangers of marijuana usage, especially concerning our Keiki.

5. **Message to Youth:**

We remain strongly concerned that the message decriminalization sends to young people is that its usage is safe, contrary to the risks highlighted by ongoing (and growing) research.