



# MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

*Every physician matters, each patient counts.*

## **TESTIMONY REGARDING CANNABIS LEGISLATION BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CANNABIS POLICY SEPTEMBER 13, 2023**

The MMS is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The MMS is committed to advocating on behalf of patients for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them to provide the best care possible. The MMS recognizes that there is a growing body of evidence regarding the benefits and risks of cannabis and we are guided by our principles which aim to protect public health and vulnerable individuals, as well as to reduce stigma and to promote effective treatment options and encourage harm reduction.

The MMS has concerns about the impact of public advertising, marketing, and promotion of cannabis in the state of Massachusetts using billboards, print and social media advertising, sponsorship, branding, and placement/density of retail locations, and other forms of public advertising. To better regulate such advertising, we support the use of current state and federal guidelines and regulations for tobacco as the standard for marketing, advertising, and product limitations for cannabis products. For these reasons, the MMS supports House bill 113, *an act relative to prohibiting billboard advertisements of non-prescription marijuana*.

H.113 proposes banning the use of billboards for advertising, marketing, and branding of non-prescription marijuana and requiring that any charitable, sporting or similar event sponsored by a cannabis licensee restrict entry to individuals 21-year-olds or older. Exposure to cannabis advertising via roadside billboards likely contributes to the social normalization and decreased perception of potential associated risks of cannabis use, especially among young people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to marijuana advertisements was associated with higher odds of current marijuana use among adolescents. Regulations that limit marijuana advertisements to adolescents can help.

MMS policy also supports state and federal funding for cannabis research. H.3557, an act relative to cannabis research funding, would establish a Massachusetts Medical Marijuana Research Fund to support research into the use of marijuana in the treatment of various conditions, including cancer, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, HIV/AIDS, epilepsy, seizures, glaucoma and multiple sclerosis. The creation of such a research fund would help advance the scientific knowledge base on the uses and benefits of marijuana.

**We therefore ask the Committee to report House bill 113, and House bill 3557 out favorably.** Thank you very much for your consideration of these important issues. We appreciate the opportunity to offer these comments.