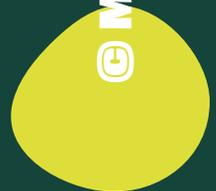


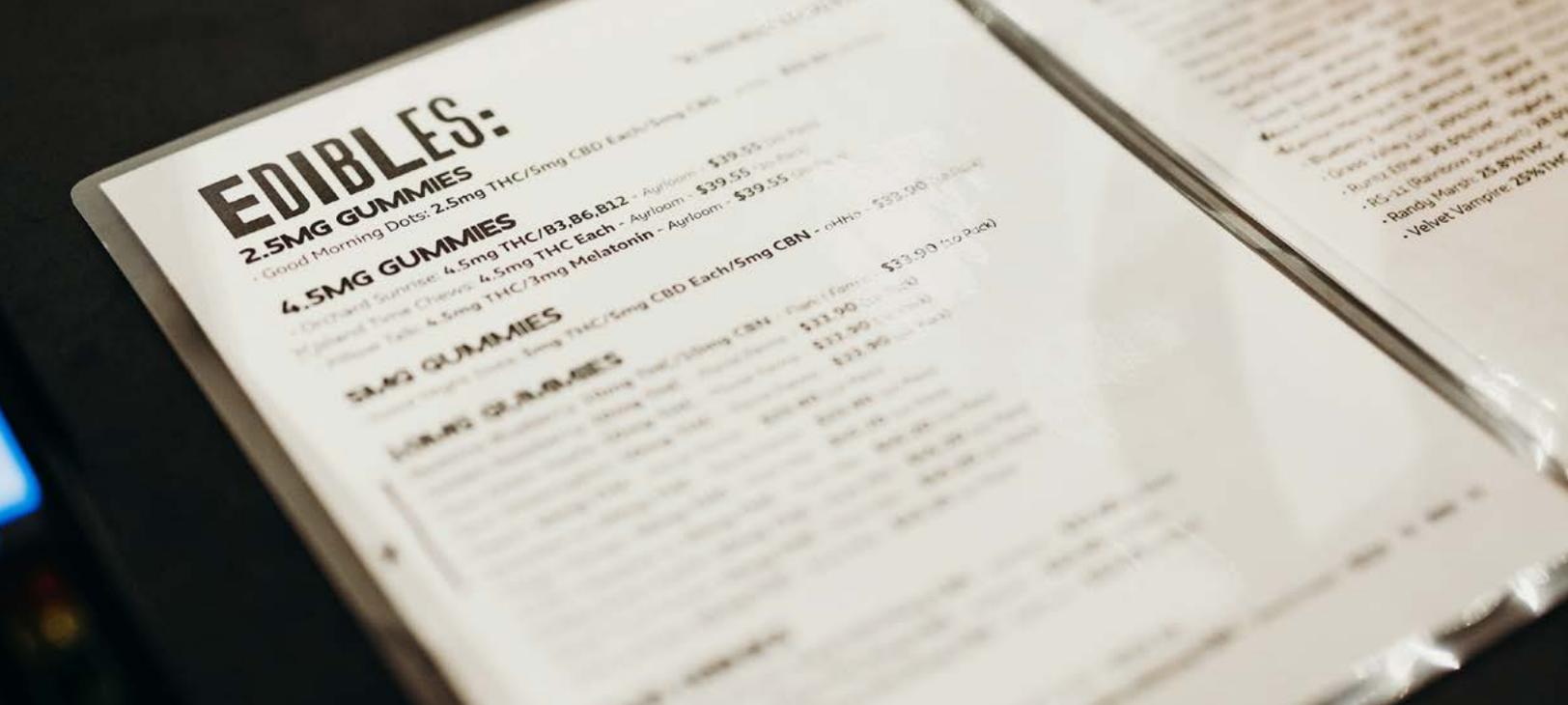
HIGH-THC MARIJUANA

**PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH
IN A CHANGING MARKET**

**DRUG
POLICY
ALLIANCE.**

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SUMMARY

Across the United States, 24 states have legalized and regulated marijuana¹ for adult use. Legalization is widely supported: a 2025 poll found that 68 percent of Americans support making marijuana legal.² Legal markets have reduced arrests that can affect someone's ability to secure a job or housing, and marijuana tax revenue has been reinvested in communities through funding for parks, housing, treatment, and other supports that communities need.

As marijuana laws continue to evolve, policymakers must also address new and emerging challenges in both legal and unregulated markets. One growing concern is the increasing availability of high-THC marijuana products. As product potency rises, so do important public health questions about safety, youth access, and consumer transparency.

At the Drug Policy Alliance, we believe legalization must be paired with thoughtful, evidence-based regulation that protects health, enhances safety, and reduces harm. This report explains what high-THC products are, outlines key public health considerations, and offers practical policy recommendations to ensure legal access for adults is preserved and grounded in public health and safety principles.

KEY FINDINGS:

- High-THC marijuana and marijuana products (edibles, beverages, etc.) are prominent across regulated and unregulated markets and come in a number of forms. Their prevalence is driven largely by advances in extraction technology, consumer demand, and economic incentives.
- There is a mixed body of research that indicates high-THC marijuana and marijuana products may have negative health impacts. They may contribute to an increase in cases of Cannabis Use Disorder and exacerbate mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, psychosis, and schizophrenia. However, more research is needed as the evidence is not conclusive.
- Young people who start using high-THC marijuana are at a greater risk of adverse effects because their brains and bodies are still developing. Regulation must prioritize their safety and wellbeing, and youth access must be restricted.
- Some medical marijuana patients rely on products with high concentrations of THC to help manage pain and other medical conditions. Regulations should therefore consider medical exemptions or alternate provisions to accommodate these patients' needs.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a unified regulatory framework for all cannabinoids (including hemp-derived products like delta-8 THC) with consistent standards for testing, labeling, age restrictions, and consumer protections.
- Strengthen research, testing, and data systems by expanding federal research access, standardizing lab testing, and improving anonymized data collection. This will help guide evidence-based policymaking.
- Protect youth through age-restricted sales, prevention, and education-focused policies. These include a national minimum age of 21 for retail sales, restrictions on youth-oriented products and marketing, and public awareness campaigns.
- Improve consumer education and product transparency with standardized serving sizes, clear THC content labeling, prominent warning labels, retail education materials, and training for dispensary staff.
- Reduce public health risks through stronger regulation of high-THC products, which could include THC-based pricing, advertising restrictions, purchase limits and required availability of lower-THC options.
- Invest marijuana tax revenue in substance use and mental health treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and public education initiatives.
- Preserve appropriate access for medical patients.
- Address the need for effective regulation and public health protections, without undermining the success of the legal market and driving people to purchase unregulated products from unlicensed vendors.
- While high-THC products raise legitimate public health concerns, banning or criminalizing these products can drive consumers toward unregulated sources, increasing risks related to product safety, potency, and contamination. Policymakers should instead adopt regulatory strategies that address these risks within a legal, controlled market.

FULL REPORT

MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION HAS DELIVERED BENEFITS, AND WE MUST ADDRESS EMERGING CONCERNS LIKE HIGH-THC

Since 2012, 24 states have legalized and regulated marijuana for adult use, affecting tens of millions of Americans. In states with regulated access, nearly \$25 billion in tax revenue has been generated and reinvested in priorities such as public health, education, and other community needs.³ Legalization has also prevented tens of thousands of arrests, reducing unnecessary enforcement costs and easing the harms associated with criminalization like barriers to jobs and housing.

At the same time, legalization has introduced new policy challenges and regulatory complexities, such as the steady increase in THC concentrations across both regulated and unregulated marijuana markets. This trend presents an evolving set of public health considerations that require careful attention, as states and policymakers navigate a rapidly changing marketplace.

THC concentrations alone, however, do not determine risk or harm; these outcomes depend on how products are used, by whom, and under what conditions.

Addressing potential health risks—while ensuring that legal marijuana markets operate safely and responsibly—demands thoughtful, evidence-based regulation and public health strategies.

This policy brief examines key issues related to high concentrations of THC in marijuana and marijuana products. It includes relevant definitions, potential public health risks, regulatory challenges, and policy options. Rather than stigmatizing or criminalizing high-THC marijuana and marijuana products, policymakers should address concerns through comprehensive regulation that restricts youth access, allows for rigorous research into health impacts, provides clear and lawful pathways to access for adults, and ensures equal participation in the legal market for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Effective regulatory systems must be adaptable, data-driven, and capable of evolving in response to emerging research, public health needs, consumer behavior, and market trends.

These considerations and options are not intended to serve as a single regulatory solution. Rather, they are tools to support informed decision-making about marijuana regulation, with a focus on public health and managing the potential risks associated with newly regulated products.



NEW FEDERAL THC STANDARD WILL RECLASSIFY MANY “HEMP” PRODUCTS AS MARIJUANA, ILLEGAL UNDER FEDERAL LAW

Marijuana and hemp are forms of the *cannabis sativa* plant.⁴

The *cannabis sativa* plant contains more than 100 chemical compounds known as cannabinoids. The most commonly known cannabinoids are delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

THC is the main cannabinoid that causes the “high” in marijuana. Other cannabinoids such as THC-A, THC-O, and delta-8 THC may also produce psychoactive effects when consumed in high enough concentrations.

CBD, or cannabidiol, is a naturally occurring compound found in the cannabis plant. It is known for its potential therapeutic properties, particularly pain relief and reducing anxiety, without producing the “high” associated with THC.

Despite their shared origin, marijuana and hemp have been treated differently under federal law. Marijuana remains a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). By contrast, from 2018 until recently, federal law defined hemp as cannabis containing no more than 0.3 percent delta-9 THC and removed it from the CSA. This effectively decriminalized hemp at the federal level. Cannabis containing more than 0.3 percent delta-9 THC remained classified as marijuana and illegal under federal law.

In November 2025, Congress passed a law to federally redefine hemp based on total THC, rather than delta-9 THC alone. This change will go into effect on November 12, 2026.⁵ Under the new framework, only industrial hemp and certain cannabinoid products containing less than 0.4 milligrams of total THC per container qualify as legal hemp.

Products that exceed this threshold will no longer qualify as hemp under federal law. They will instead fall within the federal definition of marijuana, making them federally illegal.

As a result, many products previously sold as hemp—including numerous delta-8 products—will lose their lawful status and become subject to federal criminal control.

UNDERSTANDING POTENCY VS. CONCENTRATION

Though “potency” and “concentration” are often used interchangeably, they refer to distinct concepts.

Potency reflects the amount needed to achieve an effect.

THC **concentration** denotes the amount of THC within a product, represented as a percentage or in milligrams.⁶

DEMAND, PROFIT, AND TECHNOLOGY ARE DRIVING INCREASES IN THE CONCENTRATIONS

Concentrations of THC have increased in marijuana and marijuana products across both regulated and unregulated markets.

This has been driven in part by advances in extraction technology, consumer demand, and economic incentives. As a result, there are now growing markets with marijuana and marijuana products that contain high concentrations of THC in a wide variety of forms, including marijuana flower, edibles, beverages, oils and tinctures, topicals, capsules, vape oils, and concentrates. Concentrates are highly concentrated extracts that are made by isolating the cannabinoids and terpenes from marijuana plant material. They also come in various forms, such as hash oil or honey oil—a gooey liquid—or wax. Budder is a soft solid with a texture like lip balm, and shatter is a hard, amber-colored solid.⁷

A 2020 analysis found that THC concentrations in medical marijuana programs ranged from 0% to 35% with an average concentration of 19.3%.⁹ Meanwhile, concentrations in recreational programs ranged from 0% to 45%, with an average concentration of 21.5%. An analysis of seized illicit samples by the Drug Enforcement Administration found that in 2022, samples had an average THC potency of 16% compared to roughly 4% in 1995.⁹

Despite their growing proliferation, there is no consensus on what constitutes products with “high” concentrations of THC versus products with “low” concentrations of THC, with varying definitions across states and among experts.¹⁰

WHY DO PEOPLE CONSUME HIGH-THC PRODUCTS?

Preferences:

Different consumers have different preferences. Beyond potential medical benefits, some people consume higher-THC products because they want to feel psychoactive effects like euphoria, relaxation, or pain relief. They may also experience effects such as altered thoughts and perceptions. Some people may prefer to consume smaller quantities of higher potency products rather than large amounts of lower potency products.¹¹

Access & Market Availability:

In many U.S. markets, high-potency THC products dominate retail shelves, while lower-potency options may be limited. Market availability, pricing, and marketing trends—not just consumer preference—influence use patterns.

Tolerance:

Some more experienced and frequent users also use higher-THC potency products because they have developed a tolerance and seek stronger products to feel their effects.

Uncertainty of THC Content:

Purchasing marijuana and marijuana products from the unregulated market means that most products have not been tested for content, so consumers may not know how much THC is present.^{12,13} Those who share or use marijuana products purchased by others may also not know the potency. Lastly, some people accidentally consume products with high THC, such as unlabeled edibles or a vape pen that they believed contained nicotine. Even in regulated markets, testing systems face challenges. Differences in laboratory methods, oversight gaps, and documented cases of inflated potency reporting can result in inaccurately labeled THC concentrations.

POTENTIAL HARMS AND EFFECTS THAT MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH-THC USE

Public health experts have raised concerns about potential adverse individual and public health outcomes associated with marijuana and marijuana products with high THC concentrations since, in many cases, higher doses lead to stronger effects.

Research on the impacts of high-potency products is growing, yet the majority of studies examine impacts on mental health symptoms. Many studies are methodologically weak, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions.¹⁴ More high-quality research is still needed, using methods that follow people over a longer period of time and look at their overall health to better understand the relationship between high-THC product use and health issues. Additional research on the diverse range of product types sold at dispensaries is especially needed, given the variety of products available.

An Association with Cannabis Use Disorder or Addiction:

Research suggests that people who use high-THC products may be more likely to meet criteria for cannabis use disorder or addiction.^{15, 16, 17} A person meets the criteria for an addiction if they continue to use a drug repeatedly over several months, despite experiencing numerous harms and negative consequences in their life. Individuals may be diagnosed with a mild, moderate, or severe cannabis use disorder depending on the extent their use causes harm in their lives.

Most people who meet criteria for a cannabis use disorder have less severe problems than those who have opioid or stimulant use disorders, but their marijuana use may still be disruptive and harmful.

Correlation is not causation, however, and we cannot necessarily determine which came first. It is possible that people with cannabis use disorder may use more high-THC products because they have developed a higher tolerance over time. It is also possible that the regular and frequent use of these products increased their risk of causing more harm in their lives. And it is possible that both can be true for some people. More research is needed to understand this relationship.

An Unclear Association with Depression and Anxiety:

Some research suggests increased odds of depression among those who consume higher potency marijuana and marijuana products. However, some studies show use of high-THC products has been associated with fewer depressive symptoms. At the same time, other studies have found no significant association between high-THC use and depression. More high-quality research is needed.^{18, 19, 20}

Similar to depression, there is a mixed body of research about the relationship between high-potency marijuana and marijuana products and increased anxiety, but other studies suggest that high-THC products can reduce anxiety symptoms.

Some studies have found no association between high-THC products and anxiety at all. More high-quality research is needed to understand this relationship.^{21, 22}

An Association with Psychosis and Schizophrenia:

Research studies suggest that frequent or daily use of high-THC products beginning at a younger age is associated with psychosis symptoms. This association has also been found in studies with adult populations. However, it is also possible that people with a predisposition toward psychosis or poor mental health, or a family history of these conditions, may be more likely to escalate to using high-THC products as a form of self-medication.²⁴ More research is needed.

An Association with Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS):

CHS is a syndrome in which chronic, heavy marijuana users experience recurring nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. The main medical recommendation is often for patients to stop using marijuana, since continued use can worsen symptoms.

However, research on people experiencing CHS is mostly based on those who are seeking medical assistance after symptoms have occurred. It is difficult to identify which products led to their CHS and precisely how much use led to the symptoms. Some research suggests that frequent daily consumption of high-THC marijuana or products may be associated with CHS. But there is also evidence suggesting that a significant amount of marijuana from the unregulated market contains mycotoxins and fungal contaminants, which can cause nausea as well.^{25, 26} More research is needed to understand which products and patterns of use increase risk, what the prevalence of CHS is at population-level, and which treatments may be most effective.

HIGH-THC RISK IS SHAPED BY USE PATTERNS, HEALTH STATUS, AND AGE—NOT POTENCY ALONE

Marijuana and marijuana products with high-THC concentrations may present potential harms or risks to consumers.

Research suggests that there are several factors that likely impact the risks and potential harms associated with high-THC use. Although no single risk factor can predict whether someone using a high-THC product will experience harmful effects, the combination of multiple factors may increase the risk for certain individuals. It should also be noted that research on the impacts of high-THC products specifically is still growing, as the majority of research has not distinguished between different product potencies and their health effects.²⁷

- **Frequency of Use:**

The frequency at which someone uses high-THC products may play a role in whether they experience harms.²⁸ More frequent use of potent products, such as multiple times per day or on a daily or weekly basis, may be associated with more adverse effects for consumers than lower frequency or occasional use.²⁹

- **Quantity or Amounts Used:**

The total amount or quantity of high-THC products consumed per occasion of use may have an impact on how many negative effects a consumer may experience. For instance, vaping a high-THC product all day long would expose someone to far more THC over time than someone who might eat a single high THC edible a few times a month. Consuming larger amounts of high-THC products may result in more undesired effects than smaller amounts.

- **THC to CBD ratio:**

There is mixed research about the effects of consuming relatively high ratios of THC alongside CBD and whether it has any impact in reducing or increasing harms.^{30,31} More research is needed to understand how THC interacts with CBD, other cannabinoids, terpenes, and other compounds.

- **Products Consumed:**

Some products inherently contain higher potency THC, such as resins and other extracts. Different products may be available with varying levels of THC potency, such as marijuana flower. Consuming higher potency products instead of products that contain less THC can be associated with a higher risk of harm and unintended effects.³²

- **Routes of Consumption:**

Marijuana and marijuana products can be consumed in a number of ways. They can be smoked, vaped, eaten, or drunk, and they can also be applied as lotions or taken as suppositories. The way one consumes a product can affect both the absorption rate of a high-THC product in the body and the onset of its effects. It can also affect the duration of effects. Eating an edible with a high-THC content may result in delayed effects, which can last for an extended period, and consumers may experience strong or undesired effects for hours. Meanwhile, a single puff of flower will result in faster effects that wear off sooner.

- **Polysubstance Use:**

Consuming high-THC products in combination with drugs like alcohol, tobacco, or cocaine, or while taking prescription medications, could impact which effects are felt and for how long. It can also lead to extended or unexpected adverse effects.

- **Age:**

Younger consumers may be at a higher risk of harm and unintended effects from high-THC products, as they may lack tolerance and be uncertain about what to expect. They also may not feel comfortable asking for help because they want to avoid getting in trouble for underage use. As is the case for other drugs, young people who start using high-THC marijuana are at a greater risk of adverse effects because their brains and bodies are still developing.³³ Conversely, older adults over age 65 who may have co-occurring health and mobility issues are also at high risk of adverse effects.

- **Underlying Mental Health Concerns:**

People with pre-existing depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders, schizophrenia, or other conditions may be more likely to experience adverse effects when consuming high-THC products because they can end up increasing or exacerbating these symptoms.³⁴ These individuals may be more likely to self-medicate by using high-THC products. In some cases, high-THC could make symptoms of any of these conditions worse.

- **Other Health and Medical Issues:**

The use of marijuana products among people who are pregnant or nursing can be associated with impacts on the fetus and the newborn; however, research does not distinguish between high and low-THC products.^{35, 36} People consuming high-THC products who have underlying cardiovascular or respiratory issues may be at risk of adverse effects, partially due to the route of consumption and elevated heart rate after use.



CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES: ADDRESSING HIGH-THC PRODUCTS MEANS CONFRONTING LEGAL AND MARKET GAPS

As policymakers grapple with how to address the potential public health impacts of marijuana products with high THC concentrations and how to protect at-risk populations, they are also navigating challenges that complicate effective regulation.

These challenges include research limitations, the unregulated market, economic and market dynamics, changes in the law related to hemp and its consumer safety challenges, and medical patient access.

Research Barriers:

Marijuana's status as a Schedule I controlled substance puts federal restrictions on marijuana research. This limits the production of high-quality data on the public health impacts of THC concentrations within marijuana and marijuana products. As a result, researchers are not allowed to study the marijuana products that people actually use and purchase in state-legal markets. This gap makes it more difficult for scientists and policymakers to fully understand the public health impacts of THC concentrations in real-world cannabis products. Policymakers should remove remaining federal barriers that restrict cannabis research and allow scientists to study commercially available products from state-legal markets.

Limitations of Existing Research Methods:

Much of the research on high-THC concentrations and health effects uses self-reported data by research subjects based on past use, which may

include unreliable information on diverse product types, routes of consumption, frequency, or amounts of use. In addition, associations between THC consumption and various health effects do not necessarily prove causation. There are a variety of potential pre-existing risk factors that could contribute to outcomes. Policymakers can improve the quality of marijuana research by supporting more rigorous methods—including longitudinal studies, improved product-level data collection, and better systems for tracking real-world patterns of marijuana use and health outcomes.

The Unregulated Market:

High-THC products—whether derived from marijuana or hemp—should exist within a consistent legal and regulatory system. Today, however, marijuana products remain illegal under federal law, but they are regulated in many state markets with testing, labeling, packaging, and age-restricted sales requirements. By contrast, hemp products are federally legal but largely lack a comprehensive regulatory framework governing safety, potency, and retail sales. These differences create regulatory gaps that allow some high-THC products to be produced and sold outside established safeguards—even where regulated marijuana markets exist. As a result, unregulated products can pose risks related to potency, contamination, and youth access, while undermining consumer protections and fair competition for regulated businesses.

Policymakers should establish a consistent regulatory framework for THC products, regardless of whether they are derived from marijuana or hemp, to help close these gaps and ensure uniform safety standards.

Economic and Market Dynamics:

Marijuana and marijuana products with high THC concentrations represent a growing segment of the marijuana market, reflecting both economic interest and consumer preference. Policymakers should consider regulatory tools such as tax reform, potency restrictions for certain product categories, and requirements for lower-THC alternatives to help balance market dynamics with public health goals.

Hemp Products:

Ongoing and evolving legal distinctions between hemp and marijuana have created gaps in regulation and enforcement that fail to address real risks to public health and consumer safety. These gaps have allowed hemp-derived products to be sold with limited oversight—contributing to youth access, the availability of untested or inaccurately labeled products, and inconsistent safety standards. Regulators should apply consistent testing, labeling, age restricted sales, and safety standards to all consumable THC products—regardless of whether they are derived from hemp or marijuana—to improve consumer protections.

Medical Patients:

Some medical marijuana patients rely on products with high concentrations of THC as a part of their symptom management. Regulations should therefore consider medical exemptions or alternate provisions to accommodate these patients' needs.

POLICY AND REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS: TESTING, LABELING, RESEARCH, AND YOUTH PROTECTIONS

Policymakers have several policy and regulatory options to reduce potential public health harms associated with marijuana products with high THC concentrations.

To best address this issue, a combination of regulatory, educational, and research-focused policies is recommended.

Regulate Hemp Cannabinoids like Marijuana Cannabinoids:

Regardless of whether they are derived from marijuana or hemp, cannabis and cannabinoid products intended for human consumption should be regulated under a shared, coherent framework. Applying consistent safeguards—such as product testing, clear labeling, age restricted sales, and health and safety education—helps protect consumers and promote public health. Regulating hemp-derived cannabinoids, including delta-8 THC, ensures these products are subject to the same safety and consumer protection standards.

RESEARCH, TESTING, AND DATA COLLECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand Research Funding and Remove Barriers:**

This can deepen understanding of high-THC impacts on mental health, addiction, impairment, and youth. Enhanced research enables more informed policy decisions, supports safe consumption guidelines, and provides a basis for evidence-based regulations. Federal policy needs to allow for clinical studies of products produced and sold through state-regulated marijuana programs.

- **Establish Better Data Collection Methods:**

Establishing robust, anonymized data collection systems to monitor high-THC usage, health outcomes, and demographic trends helps policymakers evaluate regulation effectiveness. Such data aids in adapting policies to emerging public health trends and consumer behavior.

- **Improve Product Testing:**

Mandating standardized testing across labs ensures accuracy in THC content and product purity, preventing misleading labels and enhancing consumer safety. Testing labs should be routinely monitored to ensure they are providing accurate results. Reliable testing is foundational for transparency and informed consumer choices.

YOUTH, PREVENTION, AND PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Restrict Youth Access, and Establish a National Minimum Age for Retail Sales:**

Establishing a national minimum age of 21 for retail sales of marijuana and high-THC products would align federal policy with existing state adult-use frameworks and other regulated substances. While underage use should not be criminalized, a uniform minimum age for retail sales could help reduce youth access, support public health and safety, and reflect evidence that younger individuals may be more vulnerable to adverse effects associated with high-THC use.

- **Prohibit Youth Marketing:**

Restricting flavored additives reduces the appeal of high-THC products to youth, protecting them from potential health risks linked to THC dependency and mental health impacts. Restricting products that resemble youth-oriented items, such as snacks or candies, reduces youth initiation, accidental consumption, and lowers the early exposure risks associated with high-THC use.

- **Improve Youth Prevention Efforts:**

Reducing youth access and use requires sustained investment in youth education and prevention resources, alongside regulatory safeguards such as restrictions on youth-oriented advertising and regular compliance checks to ensure businesses adhere to age-of-sale laws.

- **Launch Public Education Campaigns on the Risks of High-THC Products:**

Public campaigns should highlight the risks of high-THC products, like mental health effects and overconsumption. Education can reduce risky behaviors and promote safer consumption habits across all demographics. Providing educational materials at retail locations would empower consumers with THC concentration knowledge and safe consumption practices. For example, “start low and go slow” guidance can prevent overconsumption and support informed decision-making.

- **Fund Marijuana Harm Reduction, Treatment Programs, and Mental Health Programs:**

Allocating marijuana tax revenue to fund harm reduction, treatment, and mental health services provides resources to manage health issues related to high THC and prevent further complications.

THC-SPECIFIC REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Standardize Serving Size and Labels:**

Consistent THC serving sizes and clear labeling would enhance consumer understanding of product THC concentration, preventing accidental overuse. Standardized labels can provide essential information to ensure safe product use.

- **Regulate THC Concentrations:**

Regulating THC levels in certain products may mitigate health risks tied to high-THC concentrations. For example, states can restrict marketing and advertising of high-THC products, limit product serving sizes and doses, or restrict the kinds of packaging for specific product categories. This approach can help reduce exposure risks while maintaining regulated product availability.

- **Consider THC-Based Pricing:**

Taxing marijuana by THC concentration could limit high-THC product use and support public health initiatives through generated revenue. However, policymakers should assess how tax rates influence legal market access, consumer behavior, and participation in regulated markets before adopting potency-based taxes. Excessive tax burdens have the potential to unintentionally drive consumers and producers toward unregulated markets. If designed and implemented thoughtfully, this model could address public health concerns while safeguarding state tax interests amid market price declines. Banning discounts on high-THC products could also prevent pricing from driving higher usage.

- **Establish THC Purchase Limits:**

Purchase limits based on THC concentration—such as standardized serving sizes, THC potency limitations per package, and per-transaction limits for certain high-THC products—could prevent misuse and discourage bulk buying for illicit resale. This would help facilitate more responsible high-THC product distribution.

- **Require Dispensaries to Provide Low-THC Concentration Options for Consumers:**

Offering low-THC concentration products in both medical and commercial dispensaries provides a safer starting point, especially for new or high-risk users, reducing the likelihood of adverse effects associated with high-THC exposure.



OTHER REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Train Retail Employee/Provider on High-THC Products:**

Training retail staff on THC concentration, effects, and dosing allows them to better advise customers and new users on safe consumption. Educated staff can improve customer experiences and promote responsible use.

- **Limit Advertising and Marketing:**

Restricting high-THC advertising can limit youth and vulnerable population exposure to promotional materials (a lesson from tobacco and alcohol regulation). Such limits aim to prevent youth initiation and reduce high-THC appeal.

- **Mandate Warning Labels:**

Requiring prominent, evidence-based health warnings on high-THC products informs consumers of risks like mental health impacts, unintended effects, addiction, and overconsumption. Clear labeling provides vital safety information to guide safer use. Labeling standards should be developed in a manner that is both informative and easy to read.

- **Establish Community Alternatives to Commercial or For-Profit Marijuana:**

Policies that allow personal cultivation, social cooperatives, and state-monopolies may reduce exposure to products with high THC concentrations that are driven by a profit motive. These alternative models could provide legal access and support harm reduction.

- **Preserve Appropriate Access for Medical Patients:**

Medical users may need marijuana products with high THC concentrations for symptom management. Policymakers should consider how to allow for medical accommodations and provider training for informed medicinal use, ensuring patient access without compromising public health.

CONCLUSION: ENSURING PUBLIC HEALTH KEEPS PACE WITH POTENCY

Marijuana products with high THC concentrations pose complex regulatory challenges that demand a balanced, evidence-based response. As product potency increases and markets evolve, policy must keep pace. Failing to modernize regulatory frameworks poses threats to public health, particularly for youth and individuals vulnerable to mental and physical health issues and substance use disorders.

By aligning hemp and marijuana regulations, strengthening research and data collection, improving product transparency, and implementing safeguards for high-THC products, policymakers can reduce preventable harms while preserving access for adult consumers and medical patients. Public education, responsible retail practices, and reinvestment of tax revenue into treatment and prevention are critical to regulation that balances commercial interests with public health.

A strong regulatory framework that is grounded in evidence, health, and consumer protections offers the clearest path forward.

Policymakers should heed these recommendations to mitigate risks, promote informed decision-making, and ensure market innovations do not outpace health protections.



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**DRUG
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