



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF PREVENTION
PROFESSIONALS AND ADVOCATES

POSITION STATEMENT AGAINST THE LEGALIZATION OR
DECRIMINALIZATION OF DRUGS

The legalization or decriminalization of drugs would make harmful, psychoactive, and addictive substances affordable, available, convenient, and marketable. It would expand the use of drugs. It would remove the social stigma attached to illicit drug use, and would send a message of tolerance for drug use, especially to youth.

- ♣ Legalization would decrease price and increase availability. Availability is a leading factor associated with increased drug use. It is the use of illicit drugs that stimulates violence, facilitates deviant behavior, blinds one's sense of responsibility, impairs decision-making and anesthetizes the voice of conscience. The use of illicit drugs lead to social disorder and decay.
- ♣ If legalization were to occur, it would open a floodgate of drug accessibility and availability to adolescents-the age when almost every drug addict begins his/her career. Drug taking side-tracts young people from normal development at that very point in life when they are struggling to develop their sense of responsibility and accountability. The transition from childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood is chaotic at best. Drug taking in youth is the quickest way to retard this process not only in the short run but also for life.
- ♣ The legalization argument is inherently flawed by missing the point that drugs themselves and not drug laws cause the most damage to society. When you have a problem with too many people harming themselves and society, by their use of illicit drugs, it is illogical to fight the problem by making the drugs cheaper, more readily available, and socially sanctioned through legalization.
- ♣ As a public health measure, prohibition was a tremendous success; alcohol related illnesses declined dramatically during Prohibition, and then soared after repeal. Our experience with alcohol is a strong argument against legalization. If drug use were to triple as alcohol use did post-prohibition, we would have a crime and health problem almost beyond comprehension.

- ♣ Legalizing drugs will not eliminate illegal trafficking of drugs nor the violence associated with illegal drug trade. A black market would still exist unless **all** psychoactive drugs in **all** strengths were made available to **all** ages in unlimited quantity.
- ♣ Our present drug laws help break the cycle of addiction through such programs as Drug Courts and mandatory treatment. Treatment through the criminal justice system has proven to be an effective means of helping the criminal addict become drug-free.
- ♣ A study of international drug policy and its effect on countries has shown that countries with lax drug law enforcement have had an increase in drug addiction and crime. Conversely, those with strong drug policies have reduced drug use and enjoy low crime rates.
- ♣ In 2003, Maryland approved the Medical Marijuana Bill. Under the measure, people who can prove medical necessity would not face jail time for marijuana possession. The most they would face is a \$100 fine. Maryland was the ninth state to pass a law that would relax punishment of people caught with marijuana, provided they can prove they are using it for medical reasons. (source: www.mpp.org/MD/news_4527.html) MAPPa opposes this legislation as it has the potential to open the gate to further legislation.