



MICAP RECAP

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*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
Celebrating its 113th Anniversary in 2018*

AADIF/MICAP

(517) 999-0013
info@micap.org

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Beverage Alcohol Abuse, Part II by Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired Board Member and Treasurer, MICAP

NEEDED: A Beverage Alcohol Policy Intervention in Michigan

The World Health Organization (WHO), part of the United Nations, has indicated that *beverage alcohol (B/A)* is ranked third out of 26 risk factors in the developed countries in terms of their contribution to disease, disability or mortality.¹ The top two were tobacco and blood pressure, respectively.

Last month, I reported that Michigan ranked 43rd out of the 50 states with regard to its public alcohol policy which is set by our state legislature and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC). It is strongly probable that the abuse of B/A ranks 3rd in Michigan in terms of the disease, disability and mortality. Those costs, shared below, mostly cover workplace productivity, the criminal justice system, as it is affected by B/A, and treatment for health problems caused by excessive (abusive) drinking.

Since COST usually catches our attention, take a look at what you and I are paying to CLEAN UP the high cost of B/A abuse. Those costs are found in statistics which are scattered through books, the Internet, scholarly articles, etc. Our colleges and universities have done a wonderful job over the past 40 to 50 years studying B/A and its abuse. So, what follows is not just my "WHIM" but is evidence-based on good science.

The last "final annual figures" for some statistics were available from 2010 and have only risen since. Total cost for Michigan in 2010 was \$8.2 billion dollars. That divides out to \$826.00 for each man, woman and child in Michigan; or, another way of looking at it is that for every drink (paid for and drunk by the consumer) it cost the tax-payer \$2.10.² That \$2.10 is more than some of the B/A cost the purchaser. NEEDED: A Beverage Alcohol Policy Intervention in Michigan.

It would be unfair to say that the legislature nor the MLCC have done nothing about a public policy in Michigan. The three-tiered system of delivery, the de-listing of caffeinated B/A drinks, the supervised training of servers, the graduated drivers' licenses and the gradual reduction in the Blood Alcohol Concentration for drivers have contributed to reduced numbers of accidents and illnesses, etc. But much more needs to be done.

The abuse of B/A in Michigan continues to wreak havoc on our roads, in our families, in our persons and in our communities in the following ways:

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In 2016, there were 236 drinking and driving deaths.

In a random sampling, 689 persons out of 1,000 admitted to drinking/driving in the past 30 days.³

While the state average B/A impaired driving statistics were reduced over a 10-year period by -24.7%, Michigan's reduction was only -21.4%; and

While the percentage of fatal crashes involving repeat offenders dropped 73.4% over a 10-year period, Michigan's drop registered only 70.8%.⁴

A pooled rating by insurance companies gave Michigan a rank of 44 out of 50 states; with sub-rankings of 32 per 100 million miles driven and 40 for drunk driving.⁵

Deaths by liver disease have increased from a rate of 9.5 per 100k persons in 2005 to a rate of 10.2 per 100k persons in 2016.⁶

Binge-drinking is also on the rise in Michigan. NEEDED: A Beverage Alcohol Policy Intervention in Michigan.

There are several ways the Public Beverage Alcohol Policy could be improved in Michigan:

--Outlet density is a prime consideration for controlling abuse of B/A. We have had a one-half mile rule for many years. Presently, there are persons in both the legislature and MLCC determined to scrap the rule. If the rule is scrapped, it means that liquor stores and bars and outlets can have licenses right next to one another. And that builds a new normal, especially for youth, that drinking is THE THING to do. It will pad the bottom line for the liquor industry for years to come.

--Raising the price of B/A is a proven way to slow consumption. States that have a better reputation regarding their public B/A policy have found ways to do that. Granted, no one wants new taxes. But presently, those purchasing B/A are asking the public treasury to supplement their purchase with \$2.10 for every bottle/can/or glass purchased, even if they are taking it home. Yet, the last time our state legislature did anything with a tax on B/A was 1966, and they reduced the tax on beer at that time. NEEDED: A new tax on B/A which is tied to inflation. Note: One of MICAPs goals is to raise the price of a bottle/can/or glass of beer by

\$0.05. Granted that \$0.05 is not \$2.10, but it is something. A raise in B/A taxes could provide new money for the state for "health issues" and the majority of people in the state support it.

--Control of hours of sales is important in reducing the amount of abuse of B/A. MICAP has held the line on the 2:00 AM sales three times in the past 10 years. We have mounted campaigns to help the legislature see the wisdom in not lengthening the hours of sales. But again, in 2018, a new bill has come up in the legislature requesting a 4:00 AM closing time. MICAP will again fight this bill, and hopefully, we will prevail. Our readers can contact the legislature to tell them that enough is enough. 2:00 AM is adequate for a closing time. None of the states surrounding us have a 2:00 AM closing time, though that is not often told truthfully to the senators or representatives and they are eager to "level the playing field" for Michigan's small businesses (B/A outlets). I use the argument that if we change the "hours of sales" to 4:00 AM, someone going to work in the emergency room of a hospital at 4:45 AM may be hit by a drunken driver who stayed at the bar to finish his or her drink until 4:30 AM (there is a one-half hour grace period to finish your drink after closing time). Several years ago, we lost out on Sunday sales when the legislature decided to follow the liquor industry's suggestion that outlawing Sunday sales was a "Blue" law.

MICAP is not a prohibition organization. We have always been a TEMPERANCE organization. But clearly, the legislature and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission seem to cater to the whim of the business and hospitality industries. And yet, it is their responsibility, with regard to B/A, to provide a BETTER PUBLIC POLICY. NEEDED: A Beverage Alcohol Policy Intervention for Michigan.

The footnotes in the material above reference the following web-sites:

1. <https://academic.oup.com/alcalc/article/44/5/500/182556>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/features/costsofdrinking/index.html>
3. <https://cbsnews.com/pictures/drinking-and-driving-18-states-with-highest-rates/13/>
4. https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/states/data/tables.html#2015-interactive/
5. <https://www.carinsurancecomparison.com/worst-drivers-2015-interactive/>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/liver-disease.html>

Beating the Odds: How Healthy and Productive Michigan will Stop the Legalization of Recreational Marijuana in Michigan

By Abby Oliver, Healthy and Productive Michigan

As a millennial, I have grown up knowing a world deeply divided by their political views. Political polarization has so defined our political sphere, it's hard to imagine it being any other way. In a world where Republicans are defined as racist homophobes, and Democrats are labeled as socialist cry-babies, it is hard to imagine any issue transcending these deep philosophical divides. And yet there is: To legalize or not to legalize marijuana?

This question is now rising to the forefront of political debates throughout our country. As states like Colorado, Washington and California legalize the use of recreational marijuana, there is this increasing sense that this was the new normal for our country, that it is inevitable, and that is exactly how marijuana lobbyists want it.

In the Fall of 2017, these same lobbyists came to Michigan and submitted a ballot proposal, which would allow Michigan voters to decide on the 2018 ballot if recreational use should be legalized in Michigan. Concerned with this development, Scott Greenlee, an experienced political strategist, decided to form an independent ballot committee called, "Healthy and Productive Michigan" with one goal in mind: to prevent the legalization of recreational marijuana in Michigan. To do so, he decided to partner with a national organization called: Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), which has been successful in defeating similar ballot proposals in Ohio and Arizona.

There are people who think this is a losing battle, but it's a battle that can be won, and needs to be won. There is no other option. Legalizing recreational marijuana will be a detriment to every facet of our community. At "Healthy and Productive Michigan," our goal is to educate the community about the truth, and that's the purpose of this article. Following are the top five reasons why legalizing recreational marijuana is detrimental for our community.

1. Marijuana Use is Illegal According to Federal Law

Last time I checked, we live in America. America is a rule of law state, which means our laws govern our society, not the political ploys of individual law makers. Federal law states that use, growth, or sale of recreational marijuana is illegal, a convenient fact pro-marijuana groups would like to ignore.

In January, Attorney General Jeff Session, rescinded the Cole Memo. That memo allowed states to legalize recreational marijuana without interference

from the federal government. Now, the federal law will be enforced. If Michigan pushes forward with this ballot initiative, our state will enter a grey zone of legality, forcing us to put our state resources into fighting the federal government, instead of addressing local needs such as: education, infrastructure and job growth.

2. Marijuana is Bad for the Business Community

The business community stands to lose big if recreational marijuana use comes to Michigan, while Michigan's unemployment rate hovers between -4.5% (UIA, 2018), entry level jobs and skilled trade positions remain unfilled. Why is that? Employers cannot get anyone to pass a drug test. Now imagine this situation if marijuana is legalized. From 2011-2015, Colorado employers experienced a 177.8% increase in failed drug tests because of marijuana (Quest Diagnostic, 2015). As the comeback state, we have worked hard to bring jobs and businesses back to our state. We will turn back the clock on our economic progress if legalization happens in Michigan. With all the challenges marijuana brings to employers, it will deter businesses from setting up shop here. They will opt to plant their seeds in surrounding states like Wisconsin and Ohio who have already said no to legalization. Business leaders who hope to keep their companies prosperous can easily donate to Healthy and Productive Michigan, by going to <http://healthyandproductivemi.org/>.

3. Legalization Negatively Impacts Young People

One of the most staggering arguments used by pro-marijuana groups is this: legalization will not impact the lives of youth and teens. Let's use our common sense here, if this product increases in availability, youth access to the drug will increase, predisposing them to numerous health risks. Most alarmingly it severely impairs brain development and increases the risk of mental health issues (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018). These health risks are only further exacerbated by the staggering increase in THC levels – the mind-altering ingredient in marijuana – which has increased to over 90 percent (DEA, 2016) in recent years as recreational users have bred the plants toward these higher THC levels.

Marijuana is a gateway drug. Do not let anyone convince you otherwise. Using marijuana at a young age also predisposes youth to addictive behavior, which leads to abusing harder substances down the road (NIDA, 2004). As we look to our young people as

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Mailing address: P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901

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future community leaders, we cannot afford to jeopardize their ability to live a healthy and productive life.

4. Impaired Driving Will Increase

Marijuana use is not safe. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. When you drive under the influence of marijuana you put everyone at risk. According to a Michigan State Police Report, between 2012 - 2016, 514 drivers tested positive for marijuana in car accidents. In 89 percent of these accidents, the results were fatal. This number will only increase with legalization. After legalization, states like Colorado, experienced over a forty percent increase in fatal car crashes from 2013 – 2016 (Colorado Department of Transportation, 2016).

5. Legalizing Marijuana increases Racial Disparities in the Community

We live in a time where racial divides have come to the forefront of the political stage. As our nation looks for solutions to heal these divides, it is simply irresponsible to enact legislation that serves to further these divides. Legalizing recreational marijuana in Michigan would do just that. For example, a 2016 report by the Colorado Department of Public Safety reveals that Af-

rican Americans are arrested three times more often than whites for marijuana related offenses.

This racial divide also extends to our youth, as a study of FBI uniform crime reports shows that between 2012 - 2014, more African American and Hispanic youth are being arrested for marijuana related offenses in Colorado after legalization than before. While arrests for white youth decreased by eight percent, arrests for African American and Hispanic youth increase twenty-three and fifty-eight percent respectively. Say no to recreational marijuana. Say no to programs that further racial divisions in our country. It's that simple.

I'm not trying to scare you. These are just the facts. This will be our new reality if recreational marijuana is legalized in Michigan. While this is frightening, this does not have to be our fate. We can stop this, but we need your help. Help educate yourself and your community about this issue, by visiting our website (healthyandproductivemi.org) or our Facebook page (Healthy and Productive Michigan). If you are interested in volunteering or have further questions, please contact us at info@healthyandproductivemi.org. *Abby Oliver gave permission for her article to be printed in "MICAP-RECAP."*