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June 16, 2008

The Honorable Joseph Knollenberg
House of Representatives
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2209

Dear Representative Knollenberg:

Dear Representative:

I am writing to strongly urge you to vote against the Hinchey Amendment that is expected to be offered as an amendment to the FY 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. If passed, this amendment will effectively prohibit enforcement of Federal law with respect to use of smoked marijuana as "medicine" in states that have decriminalized its use for this purpose. I strongly urge you to oppose this amendment not only because smoked marijuana is an illegal, addictive Schedule I drug with no medicinal value, but also because this sends the entirely wrong message to the youth of America.

To date, the FDA has not approved nor has it found any medicinal value in smoked marijuana, which is why it remains a Schedule I controlled substance. Furthermore, in the states that have legalized smoked marijuana for so-called "medicinal" purposes, seriously ill, elderly patients are not the only patients receiving marijuana – children are as well. In fact, at a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, Dr. Claudia Jensen, of Ventura, California, testified that she prescribes marijuana as medicine for adolescents under her care who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). When expressing their opposition to the legalization of smoked marijuana, the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that "Any change in the legal status of marijuana, even if limited to adults, could affect the prevalence of use among adolescents." When doctors willingly give children marijuana, it makes children believe that marijuana is harmless.

In fact, smoked marijuana is not a harmless drug. To the contrary, it is the most widely abused illicit drug in the nation. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 14.8 million (about 73%) of the approximately 20.8 million current illicit drug users are using smoked marijuana. Research shows that the decline in the use of any illegal drug is directly related to its perception of harm or risk by the user. Advertising smoked marijuana as medicine sends the wrong message to America's youth – that marijuana is not dangerous. Congressman Hinchey's amendment goes even further by removing the ability of law enforcement officials to enforce Federal law. This amendment would severely dilute prevention efforts.

I strongly urge you to help us protect our nation's youth and oppose any and all amendments limiting the enforcement of the Federal law pertaining to smoked marijuana. Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Donna Schaerer
248-360-3760

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