

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Robert Renny Cushing, Chair
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Legislative Office Building, Room 204
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1663 (Relative to the Legalization and Regulation of Cannabis)

Dear Representative Cushing and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

As Director of Public Policy for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to register our **opposition to HB 1663** and I urge the Committee to find this bill inexpedient to legislate.

One of the primary concerns of the Catholic Church in New Hampshire – a concern that of course is shared by all citizens of New Hampshire, whether they are of any particular religious background or none at all - is promoting the safety and well-being of children and families. HB 1663, which aims to legalize marijuana, conflicts with this most important goal.

There is still a lot we do not know about the effects of the types of marijuana that are distributed in states where it has been legalized. But based on research and the experience of other states, we do know about the impact of recreational marijuana on the most vulnerable among us. Studies have shown that marijuana harms the learning, memory, and attention functions of the developing brains of young people. We know from Colorado, for example, that the use of marijuana in children and pregnant mothers has increased since recreational marijuana was legalized there. Representatives from several states, including Colorado and Oregon, reported to the recent Study Commission here in New Hampshire their concerns with edible marijuana products, including accidental overdoses when children consumed marijuana-spiked brownies, candies, and other innocent-looking foods. We also know that in states where marijuana is legalized, distributors increasingly are located in low-income neighborhoods, taking advantage of those in poverty.

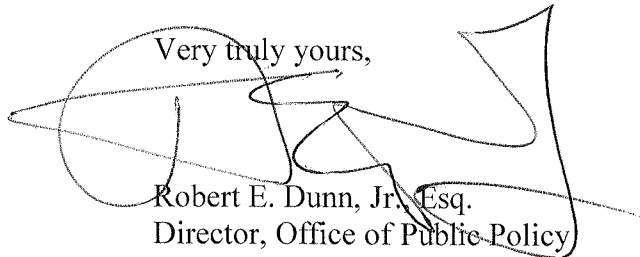
After so many years of anti-tobacco campaigns aimed at young and old, the problem of addiction to nicotine is still rampant among the young. Vaping has been found to be just as problematic for its nicotine content, and there is a campaign to curtail its availability. Consumption of alcohol that is illicitly provided to underage people continues, despite efforts to curtail that. As we all know, misuse of other drugs is the current challenge we face as a state and nation. Family life and the good of society will be enhanced not by legalizing recreational marijuana, but rather by putting a stop to its spread.

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Our state continues to struggle with a drug crisis that has cost the lives of thousands of people and has devastated the lives and health of countless more. We ask you to focus on efforts that will prevent the misuse of drugs and protect and care for the gifts of life and health. Therefore, we urge you to reject HB 1663.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views and for your service to the State of New Hampshire.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. E. Dunn, Jr.", is written over the typed name and title. The signature is stylized and somewhat illegible due to overlapping loops and lines.

Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy