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## **CALIFORNIA STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION**

### **POSITION STATEMENT ON EFFORTS TO LEGALIZE RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA**

The California State Sheriffs' Association (CSSA) is concerned with the safety and welfare of all Californians and seeks to preserve the rights of all individuals to live and work in communities where drug abuse is not accepted nor subjected to its adverse effects. We believe the effort to legalize marijuana is contrary to the interests of the public health, safety, and welfare, and therefore are opposed to any attempt to decriminalize the use of this drug for recreational use.

Despite "legalization" efforts in other states, marijuana remains a Schedule I drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act and is defined as having a high potential for abuse. The dangers of marijuana, and the threat to public safety caused by its use in terms of highway safety, criminal activity, and domestic violence, are well-documented.

Statistics from the National Institute on Drug Abuse show that marijuana reduces motor coordination and slows reaction time, a dangerous combination when operating a motor vehicle. In addition, nearly 4.2 million people over the age of 12 had a marijuana abuse or addiction problem in 2011.

Legalization of marijuana will likely increase drug use and health care costs due to abuse and overdoses of the drug. The black market for marijuana will likely remain strong as many drug cartels will not work within a regulatory system that will reveal the extent of their other illegal activities or subject their industry to tax levies and licensure.

One need only to look to Colorado, which recently legalized the recreational use of marijuana, to see the tremendous societal impacts of this misguided effort. Since legalization, Colorado has experienced major increases in fatalities arising from driving under the influence of marijuana. The number of children being exposed to marijuana has grown significantly, as has the injury and damage caused by extraction of concentrated cannabis. Marijuana is being illegally diverted to other states and tax revenues are failing to meet expectations as users are flocking to medical marijuana dispensaries and the thriving black market.

California Sheriffs strongly reject the notion that marijuana is harmless. The marijuana being cultivated today is exponentially more concentrated than that of years ago. The potential for abuse and overdose is extremely great. Law enforcement is on the front lines of the damage, lost lives and broken communities that result from the careless use of this drug. Our message is clear: marijuana is a dangerous drug and California should not legitimize its use.