

March 1, 2017

TO: Mayors of all municipalities in Richland County, Ohio
Trustee Boards in all townships in Richland County, Ohio

CC: Board of Richland County Commissioners
Ohio Attorney General
Director of Ohio Department of Commerce

Ohio House Speaker
Ohio Senate President
Ohio Governor

RE: Clergymen opposing medical marijuana development in Richland County, Ohio

Dear Distinguished Elected Officials:

Thank you for your dedicated civil service. According to language in House Bill 523, legislative authority is given to a municipal corporation to adopt an ordinance, and given to a board of township trustees to adopt a resolution, to prohibit, or to limit the number of, licensed retail dispensaries of medical marijuana within the municipal corporation or within the unincorporated territory of the township.¹

Consequently, legislative authority is given to local government since medical marijuana is a schedule II controlled substance. A schedule II controlled substance is considered to have a high potential for abuse.²

It is our understanding that the House Bill 523 allows medical marijuana to be prescribed as treatment for the following medical conditions: AIDS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, Crohn's disease, epilepsy or another seizure disorder, fibromyalgia, glaucoma, hepatitis C, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, pain that is either chronic and severe or intractable, Parkinson's disease, positive status for HIV, post-traumatic stress disorder, sickle cell anemia, spinal cord disease or injury, Tourette's syndrome, traumatic brain injury, and ulcerative colitis.³

Permissible forms and methods for use of medical marijuana permits only the following forms of medical marijuana: oils, tinctures, plant material, edibles, patches, and any other form approved by the Board of Pharmacy. Nevertheless, smoking marijuana is currently not allowed.⁴

Suffice to say, there are at least three Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved derivatives of medical marijuana which include the active ingredient in marijuana called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).⁵

Although the Food and Drug Administration has approved these drugs for medical purposes, use of these drugs do not come without risk. In fact, taking properly prescribed drugs is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. More recent analysis estimates 128,000 Americans die each year as a result of taking medications as prescribed.⁶

Nothing could be further from the truth when the medical marijuana experts assert that their product will ease the opioid addiction epidemic. This claim brings to mind the 'wonder drugs' of Suboxone⁷ and Methadone⁸ which were both touted as the answer to treating painkiller addiction, only to become addicted and abused drugs in their own right. Medical marijuana will be no different. Ironically, while the federal government has eased its penalties for illicit drug offenses, it has on the other hand escalated its restriction of religious freedoms, in many cases outlawing religious acknowledgement⁹ and religious expression.^{10, 11}

Furthermore, as clergymen in Richland County, Ohio representing Seventy (70) congregations, we oppose the harvesting and sale of medical marijuana in municipalities and townships within Richland County, Ohio and urge City Councils and Trustee Boards to prohibit this industry in their jurisdictions based on these determining factors: addictive nature of marijuana,^A adverse health effects of marijuana,^B affiliation between crime and marijuana,^C inevitable illegal diversion of marijuana that will occur,^{D, E} local and state history on record of opposing marijuana for medical and recreational purposes,^{F, G} and lastly, the dangerous message sent to impressionable youth.

In closing, as stakeholders in the community, we clergymen believe that the Marijuana Industry is using medical Marijuana as a steppingstone to recreational Marijuana. The economic cost to society will far outweigh any potential revenue this industry generates. Just because the Ohio State Legislature confounded the electorate by legalizing the use of medical Marijuana, it does not mean it is right.

As the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:12," All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient, all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

For what it's worth, at the turn of the twentieth century, Bayer Pharmaceuticals developed a new non-addictive alternative drug to replace dangerous morphine as a cough suppressant for children with tuberculosis. However, as the hospitals began filling up with addicted patients, the drug was discontinued. The name of this powerful miracle drug? ...medical Heroin.¹² May Richland County know right from wrong and not fall for such schemes.

A. Addictive nature of Marijuana

"Prevalence of Marijuana Use Disorders in the United States between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013," by DS, Saha TD, Kerridge BT, et al. JAMA Psychiatry. 2015; 72(12):1235-1242. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.1858.

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>

Data suggest that 30 percent of those who use marijuana may have some degree of marijuana use disorder.

"Probability and predictors of the cannabis gateway effect: A national study" The International Journal of Drug Policy February 2015, Volume 26, Issue 2, Pages 135–142 [http://www.ijdp.org/article/S0955-3959\(14\)00204-7/abstract?cc=y](http://www.ijdp.org/article/S0955-3959(14)00204-7/abstract?cc=y)

A large proportion of individuals who use cannabis as a "gateway drug" go on to use other illegal drugs. Lifetime cumulative probability estimates indicated that 44.7% of individuals with lifetime cannabis use progressed to other illicit drug use

B. Adverse health effects of Marijuana

"Marijuana Use Linked To Rare, Sudden Weakening Of Heart Muscles, 'Broken Heart Syndrome,' by Ed Cara, Medical Daily, Nov 14, 2016, <http://www.medicaldaily.com/marijuana-use-linked-rare-sudden-weakening-heart-muscles-broken-heart-syndrome-404324> **Marijuana use linked to broken heart syndrome which includes weakening of heart and symptoms of cardiac arrest**

"Study finds abnormally low blood flow in the brain of marijuana users," published in The Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, November 28, 2016, <http://www.news-medical.net/news/20161128/Study-finds-abnormally-low-blood-flow-in-the-brain-of-marijuana-users.aspx> **The brain's memory and learning center, has the lowest blood flow in marijuana users suggesting vulnerability to Alzheimer's. As U.S. races to legalize marijuana for medicinal and recreational use, this study gives reason for caution.**

"Teens who smoke pot at risk for later schizophrenia, psychosis," by Ann MacDonald March 7, 2011, Harvard Health Publications, Harvard Medical School <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/teens-who-smoke-pot-at-risk-for-later-schizophrenia-psychosis-201103071676> **Marijuana use associated with schizophrenia**

"The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact," Vol. 3/September 2015, p. 3, <http://otfca.net/wp-content/docs/co-legalization-report-2015.pdf> **three years after medical marijuana was commercialized; there was a 46 percent increase in hospitalizations related to marijuana.**

C. Affiliation between Crime and Marijuana

"Family Massacre Reveals Ohio's Massive, Illicit Marijuana Business," by Abby Haglage, The Daily Beast, April 27, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/27/family-massacre-reveals-ohio-s-massive-illicit-marijuana-business.html> **The Rhoden family were running a commercial-sized pot operation when someone murdered them last week. The rural area where they lived actually is a strategic link in the international drug trade**

"Richland County Sheriff: 23 overdoses at rural Ohio music festival," by Kaily Cunningham, Fox 8 News Cleveland, August 6, 2016, <http://fox8.com/2016/08/06/richland-county-sheriff-23-overdoses-at-rural-ohio-music-festival/> **23 people overdosed during a music festival at the Ohio Dreams Sports Camp in Richland County. According to the Sheriff, all 23 people hospitalized consumed candy that was believed to be laced with THC the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana**

“Pot grower was armed, ready to fight,” by Holly Zachariah, June 16, 2012, The Columbus Dispatch <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2012/06/16/pot-grower-was-armed-ready-to-fight.html> **Morrow County , Ohio deputy shot five times by man attempting to cover up his 1,700 marijuana plant growing operation**
The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact Vol. 3/September 2015, p. 4, <http://otfca.net/wp-content/docs/co-legalization-report-2015.pdf> Between 2009-2012, **when medical marijuana was commercialized, the yearly average number interdiction seizures of Colorado marijuana increased 365 percent** from 52 to 242 per year.

D. Inevitable Illegal diversion of Marijuana

“Medical marijuana report proves Colorado MMJ being illegally diverted, advocate says,” by Michael Roberts, August 2, 2012 <http://www.westword.com/news/medical-marijuana-report-proves-colorado-mmj-being-illegally-diverted-advocate-says-5849235> **Tom Gorman, director of the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area., presented a report entitled "Colorado's 'Medical' Marijuana" lists more than seventy such incidents where medical marijuana was being illegally diverted from patients, caregivers and dispensaries.**

“Colorado’s medical pot industry fuels illegal trade, review shows,” by Kirk Mitchell and Ryan Parker, Denver Post, April 30, 2016, <http://www.denverpost.com/2012/08/02/colorados-medical-pot-industry-fuels-illegal-trade-review-shows-2/> **Despite the most complex and strict medical marijuana laws in the country, Colorado patients, caregivers and dispensaries all have diverted medical marijuana to illegal use in 23 states**

E. Recent Ohio cases involving doctor malpractice and drug trafficking

“Mansfield psychiatrist indicted in drug fraud investigation,” July 13, 2012 by OTFCA, <http://otfca.net/mansfield-psychiatrist-indicted-in-drug-fraud-investigation/> **A Mansfield, Ohio psychiatrist could receive 20 years in federal prison and a \$1 million fine if convicted of prescription fraud. David Walter Massie, 59, was indicted last week on a single count of conspiracy to distribute 4,000 pills of Oxycontin**

“Prison for doctor who sold painkillers to addicts,” by WOIO, Cleveland 19 News, 2013 <http://www.cleveland19.com/story/22679708/prison-for-doctor-who-sold-painkillers-to-addicts> **Ohio Psychiatrist who had business offices in Lakewood, Beachwood, and his home office in Cleveland Heights, plead guilty for prescribing pain medication illegally**

“Local doctor facing felony drug charge,” By Jeff Gilliland, The Times Gazette, July 6, 2016, <http://timesgazette.com/news/8794/hillsboro-doctor-arrested> **A Hillsboro, Ohio doctor has been arrested on an aggravated trafficking in drugs charge, for selling prescriptions for narcotics**

“Documents: Oxford doctor accused of selling over 700 pills,” by Lauren Pack, Journal News, Oct. 26, 2016, <http://www.journal-news.com/news/crime--law/documents-oxford-doctor-accused-selling-over-700-pills/8zkOTXNwouJE8kEkiJO2O/> **An Oxford , Ohio doctor facing multiple counts of drug trafficking is accused of selling more than 700 Oxycodone pills and other drugs**

“Ohio doctor pleads guilty to drug charges,” by Associated Press, published on Jan. 30, 2017, The Toledo Blade, <http://www.toledoblade.com/Courts/2017/01/30/Ohio-doctor-pleads-guilty-to-drug-charges.html> **A Columbus doctor and former university trustee pleaded guilty today to charges of tax evasion and running a pill mill in Columbus that served hundreds of patients a day**

F. History of Local Opposition to Proposed Marijuana Legalization Measures

“Mansfield council lines up against marijuana issue, by Linda Martz, Mansfield News Journal, October 21, 2015

“Mansfield Council passes resolution against State Issue 3,” Staff report, Richland Source, October 21, 2015

“Commissioners speak out against Issue 3,” by Brittany Schrock, Richland Source, October 21, 2015

“Ohio marijuana legalization measure fails,” by Jackie Borchardt, Cleveland Plain Dealer, November 3, 2015

http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2015/11/ohio_marijuana_legalization_me.html **Ohio voters overwhelmingly defeated Issue 3 marijuana proposal for recreational and medicinal use by 64 to 36 percent margin**

“Ohio House passes medical marijuana plan,” by Jessie Balmert , May 10,2016

<http://www.mansfieldnewsjournal.com/story/news/state/2016/05/10/ohio-house-passes-medical-marijuana-plan/84197358/> **State Representative Mark Romanchuk opposes medical marijuana bill**

“Reluctant or not, lawmakers send medical marijuana to Kasich,” by Canton Repository, May 25, 2016

<http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20160525/NEWS/305259998> **Senator Larry Obhoff opposes medical marijuana bi**

G. Political bodies who either opposed/delayed Medical Marijuana implementation

“Lakewood, other Ohio cities block medical marijuana business licenses months before any will be awarded,” August 8, 2016, http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2016/08/ohio_cities_preemptively_block.html
Lakewood, Beavercreek, and Piqua recently passed six-month moratoriums on licensing businesses and Rocky River, Lancaster, Lima and Liberty Township in Southwest Ohio are working on similar temporary bans

“Troy rejects medicinal marijuana dispensaries,” Staff report, Dayton Daily News Feb. 6, 2017
<http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/breaking-news/troy-rejects-medicinal-marijuana-dispensaries/O6f6ap0WCAH0HY8S2w0V4L/> **Council voted to turn down a proposed ordinance that would have allowed up to three medical marijuana dispensaries**

“Mentor, Kirtland address medical marijuana,” by Betsy Scott, The News-Herald, Published on October 27, 2016, <http://www.news-herald.com/article/HR/20161027/NEWS/161029491> **Mentor City Council passed legislation prohibiting cultivation, processing and/or retail dispensing of medical marijuana. More than 50 Ohio cities have approved similar moratoriums ranging from six months to two years.**

“Council passes medical marijuana moratorium,” by Daniel Carson , The News Messenger, Sept. 9, 2016
<http://www.thenews-messenger.com/story/news/local/2016/09/09/council-passes-medical-marijuana-moratorium/89825940/> **Fremont City Council has approved a one-year moratorium on medical marijuana**

“Lorain puts hold on medical marijuana,” by Richard Payerchin, The Morning Journal, Published December 6, 2016, <http://www.morningjournal.com/article/MJ/20161206/NEWS/161209668> **Lorain City Council approved a 12-month moratorium on any building permits or certificates of occupancy for anyone seeking to distribute medical marijuana**

“Cities Across the Nation are Banning Cannabis Before It’s Even Legalized,” by Julia Granowicz , Nov 7, 2016
<https://www.marijuanatimes.org/cities-across-the-nation-are-banning-cannabis-before-its-even-legalized/>
Findlay City Council has just approved a 2 year moratorium on the cultivation and sale of medical marijuana

“Miamisburg expected to extend medical marijuana permit ban,” By Nick Blizzard , Dayton Daily News, January 23, 2017, <http://www.mydaytondailynews.com/news/local-govt--politics/miamisburg-expected-extend-medical-marijuana-permit-ban/OIOoAb1qOk5c0VemFTXGKJ/> **Miamisburg is considering a 9-month extension on banning medical pot permits**

“Dover City Council bans medical marijuana sales inside city,” By Nancy Molnar Times-Reporter, Posted Sep ember 7, 2016 <http://www.timesreporter.com/news/20160907/dover-city-council-bans-medical-marijuana-sales-inside-city>
Dover City Council voted unanimously to ban medical marijuana dispensaries, cultivators and processors in the city; also prohibits city employees from using marijuana and bans public use of the drug

“New Phila City Council nixes growing, selling pot in city,” by Alex Knisley, Times-Reporter ,September 7, 2016
<http://www.timesreporter.com/news/20160907/new-phila-city-council-nixes-growing-selling-pot-in-city> **New Philadelphia City Council members passed an ordinance that outlaws medical marijuana cultivators, processors and retail dispensaries from being operated anywhere within the city**

“Northeast Ohio Cities Approve Delays on Medical Marijuana Dispensaries,” by Nick Castele, September 13, 2016, <http://www.ideastream.org/news/northeast-ohio-cities-approve-delays-on-medical-marijuana-dispensaries> **Akron approved a one-year moratorium on medical marijuana dispensaries**

“Cleveland City Council Declares 12-Month Moratorium on Growing Medical Marijuana,” By Chris Mosby- October 25, 2016, <http://patch.com/ohio/cleveland/cleveland-city-council-declares-12-month-moratorium-growing-medical-marijuana> **Cleveland City Council has put a 12-month moratorium on the cultivation, processing and sale of medical marijuana within city limits**

Plain Township employees will not be permitted to use medical marijuana,” by Dave Nethers, Fox 8 News August 25, 2016, “<http://fox8.com/2016/08/25/plain-township-employees-will-not-be-permitted-to-use-medical-marijuana/> Plain Township trustees have added medical marijuana to their list of banned substances on the township's drug free workplace policy

Additional References

1 Ohio Legislative Service Commission Bill Analysis, Sub. H.B. 523, 131st General Assembly
<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=5399&format=pdf>, p. 32

2 [ibid.](#) p.6

3 [ibid.](#) p. 11

4 [ibid.](#) p.12

5 “The Dirty Little Secret Pot Pushers Don’t Want You to Know About, by Cully Stimson, Daily Signal, August 4, 2016,
<http://dailysignal.com/2016/08/04/the-dirty-little-secret-pot-pushers-dont-want-you-to-know-about/>

6 “Death by Prescription, “ by Michael O. Schroeder, U. S. News and World Report, Sept. 27, 2016
<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2016-09-27/the-danger-in-taking-prescribed-medications>

7 “Suboxone, the New Drug Epidemic?” posted on National Pain Report, September 23, 2013,
<http://nationalpainreport.com/suboxone-new-drug-epidemic-8821747.html>

8 “Methadone patients fight heroin treatment stigma ,” by John Keilman , Chicago Tribune, July 12, 2016,
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-heroin-methadone-met-20160712-story.html>

9 “Ban on judge's Ten Commandments poster stands as Supreme Court declines case,” by Warren Richey, Christian Science Monitor, October 3, 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2011/1003/Ban-on-judge-s-Ten-Commandments-poster-stands-as-Supreme-Court-declines-case> **Federal Government: U.S. citizen and Common Pleas Court Judge James DeWeese has no First Amendment Rights**

10 “U.S. Supreme Court affirms firing of teacher Freshwater,” by Jack Torry, Columbus Dispatch October 6, 2014,
<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/10/06/Supreme-Court-freshwater-case.html> **Federal Government: U.S. citizen and high school teacher John Freshwater has no First Amendment Rights.**

11 “Banned: Ohio School drops musical version of 'Lord's Prayer' from graduation,” by Todd Starnes, Fox News & Opinion, May 18, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/05/18/banned-school-drops-musical-version-lords-prayer-from-graduation.html> **Federal Government: U.S. citizens of the East Liverpool, Ohio School District have no First Amendment Rights.**

12 <http://webcoist.momtastic.com/2010/07/12/mad-medicine-14-crazy-cures-from-ages-past/>

Lead Clergymen representing Seventy (70) congregations from Richland County, Ohio who oppose the harvesting and sale of medical marijuana in municipalities and townships within Richland County, Ohio and urge City Councils and Trustee Boards to prohibit this industry in their jurisdictions:

Reverend El Akuchie, Richland Community Prayer Network
Pastor Ted Howard, Apostolic Holiness
Pastor Dennis Nezrick, Grace Evangelical Free
Pastor Bill Lewis, Butler River of Life
Pastor Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community
Pastor Keith Carlisle, Ontario First Wesleyan
Pastor Henry Bradley, New Community Temple COG
Pastor Patrick Bailey, North Bend Church of Brethren
Pastor James Spencer, Peoples' Baptist
Pastor DeWayne Smith, Main Street United Methodist
Pastor Jerry Lauder milk, Ontario Abundant Life
Pastor Jeff Mills, Living Stone Community
Pastor Ben Gregg, Plymouth Church of GOD
Pastor Larry Hulver, New Liberty Baptist
Pastor Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Fellowship
Pastor Les Champer, Shelby Church of the Nazarene
Pastor Ron Puff, Pleasant Valley Baptist
Pastor Troy Wooten, Christian Life Center
Pastor David Ferrell, Mansfield Holiness Chapel
Pastor Mark Dettmer, Pleasant Grove Community
Pastor Ferlie Yates, Hanna Road Church of GOD
Pastor Kevin Evans, Liberty Baptist
Pastor Mike Stine, Clear Fork Alliance
Pastors Les-Grace Farley, My Father's House Family Worship
Pastor Christopher Thomas, Diamond Hills Baptist
Pastor Bruce Copley, Faith Chapel
Pastor Matthew Pond, First Freewill Baptist
Pastor Victor Hernandez, Ontario New Life
Pastor James Hill, Paradise Freewill Baptist
Pastor Clarence Sanderfer, New Life Baptist
Pastor Caesar Coney, Christ Temple COGIC
Pastor Dink Porter, First Church of the Open Bible
Pastor Richard Aites, Abundant Grace Fellowship
Pastor Jim Randas, Lexington Presbyterian
Pastor David Howell, Power House Worship Center
Pastor Larry Hill, Bethel Freewill Baptist

Pastor Eric Byrom, Mansfield Grace Fellowship
Pastor William Crank, Cornerstone Freewill Baptist
Pastor Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Baptist Temple
Pastor Walter Keib, Shelby First Baptist
Pastor Rick Lewis, Shelby Church of GOD
Pastor George Lewis, Shelby Temple of GOD
Pastor Art Kennard, Maranatha Christian Center
Pastor Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist
Pastor Russell Stanford, All Believers in Christ
Pastor Anthony Cooper, Shelby Life Church
Pastor Bill Henderson, First Baptist
Pastor Bill Fisher, Mansfield Grace Temple
Pastor Bill Howell, Messiah House of Prayer
Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren
Pastor Don Wilson, Mansfield Faith Assembly
Pastor Rich Hurles, Life Point Community
Pastor Ronnie Conn, Elm Street Freewill Baptist
Pastor Glen Phillips, Hillside First Church of GOD
Pastor David Guild, Mansfield Foursquare Gospel
Pastor Phil Green, Real Life Community
Pastor Robert O'Brien, Apostolic Faith Assembly
Pastor Mike Workman, Caeserea Baptist
Pastor Steven Baldrige, Rome Community
Pastor Aaron Williams Jr., Maddox Memorial Temple
Pastor William Jordan, Faith Temple COGIC
Pastor Brian Graham, Shiloh Wesleyan Evangelical
Rabbi William Hallbrook, Sar Shalom Messianic
Pastor Jody Odom, Ambassadors for Christ
Pastor Willie Mack, Phillipian Community Baptist
Pastor Clinton Hearn, Mt. Hermon Missionary Baptist
Pastor Louis Blevins, Latter Rain COGIC
Pastor Thomas Hunt, Providence Baptist
Pastor Mark Bailey, Mansfield Freewill Baptist
Pastor Jeff Gray, Ontario First Church of GOD
Pastor Floyd Glick, First Church of the Nazarene