

CLERGY JOINT STATEMENT ON OHIO ISSUE 2

On November 7th, 2023, Ohioans will decide on Issue 2 whether to legalize Recreational Marijuana, or whether to “VOTE NO” to safeguard Ohio’s future. First it was legalizing Medical Marijuana legislatively, now the cannabis industry wants Recreational Marijuana codified into state law. The goal of the cannabis industry is crystal clear- it wants to decriminalize all illicit drug use, which will only cloud Ohio’s future.

As the general public becomes desensitized to drug abuse, the next generation will become desensitized to right and wrong. While GOD has provided many helpful medicines which come from trees and plants, the Bible plainly states there was one tree in the Garden which was forbidden to eat from. In other words, there are natural products that can be toxic, like Marijuana. As clergymen from one hundred forty-two (142) congregations, we believe it would be morally wrong to legalize Recreational Marijuana due to indisputable evidence showing Marijuana is addictive, habit-forming, and negatively impacts a person’s self-control.

As the Bible says in Proverbs 25, “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.”

The rap sheet on cannabis is long. For over fifty-years the federal government has classified Marijuana as a Schedule 1 substance because of its high potential for abuse. Whether it is flying a plane, (1) driving a car, (2) or navigating life, Marijuana decimates a person’s self-control. It cognitively impairs its users by reducing reaction time, decreasing the ability to focus, and increasing risk-taking behavior. And if that is not enough, this illicit drug, which is more potent than ever, alters the user’s mind and is associated with Schizophrenia and insomnia. (3) Like second-hand smoke, the psychotic properties of Marijuana adversely impact surrounding populations.

One Morrow County Sheriff’s Deputy almost lost his life in 2010 when uncovering a clandestine Marijuana-growing operation. Irrationally guarding his 1,700 Marijuana plants, a psychotic landowner shot Detective Brandon Moore four times. Shane Roush was later convicted for attempted murder and felonious assault. (4)

As the Bible says in Luke 6, “Every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil.”

The American Automobile Association took ten years of data from Washington State which legalized Recreational Marijuana in 2012. They found the percentage of THC-Positive drivers doubled after recreational use was legalized, and fatal crashes involving drivers who tested positive for Marijuana also increased two-fold. (5)

One Cuyahoga County teenager who was smoking Marijuana, intentionally drove her car 100 mph into a wall, killing her boyfriend and acquaintance. She was convicted of four counts of murder this past summer. (6)

The Ohio faith community has consistently led the way in providing drug treatment ministries and opposing the use of Marijuana. In 2017 lead clergymen representing seventy congregations in Richland County spoke with one voice in opposing the harvesting and dispensing of Marijuana. (7) In 2022, lead clergymen representing one-hundred-ten congregations from nine different counties opposed the state legalization of Recreational Marijuana. (8)

As key stakeholders from one hundred forty-two (142) diverse congregations from 20 counties, we support vibrant communities, and believe legalization of Recreational Marijuana will radically disrupt the health and safety of our culture. In 2015, Ohioans overwhelmingly opposed the legalization of Recreational Marijuana. Now this Fall on Tuesday November 7th, we encourage Ohioans to do the same and “VOTE NO” on Issue 2. Do not let the Buckeye State get lost in the weeds...

The following lead clergymen representing one hundred forty (142) congregations across 20 counties are urging registered Ohio voters to oppose Recreational Marijuana and VOTE NO on State Issue 2:

Dr. Jeff Mills, Mifflin Little Flock Fellowship	Pastor Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Temple Baptist
Pastor Bryan Schatzinger, Calvary Chapel	Pastor Paul Lintern, Oakland Lutheran Church
Pastor Paul Lintern, Southside Christian	Pastor Joseph Yerger, First Evangelical Presbyterian
Pastor John Temple, Loudonville Trinity Church	Pastor George Swain, Homerville Grace Brethren
Pastor J.C. Church, Victory in Truth Ministries	Pastor Russ Smith, Shiloh Wesley Evangelical
Pastor John Bouquet, Savannah Bethel Chapel	Pastor Mark Dettmer, Pleasant Grove Community
Pastor Robert O'Brian, Mansfield Apostolic Faith	Pastor Lucian Baker, Christ the King Church
Dr. Ricky Branham, Willard Ripley Chapel	Pastor Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community Church
Pastor Joe Maggelet, Ashland Fellowship Christian	Pastor Dan Barker, Cortland Trinity Baptist
Pastor Bruce Philippi, Journey Life Center	Pastor Michael Constantino, Girard New Life Church
Pastor Layton Broome, Lakefork United Methodist	Pastor Layton Broome, Hayesville United Methodist
Pastor Matthew Pond, Shelby First Freewill Baptist	Rabbi Michael Oyler, Star in the East Messianic
Pastor Chad Berry, Lexington New Liberty Baptist	Pastor Marvin Barney, Warren Champion Presbyterian
Pastor Denny Nezrick, Lexington Presbyterian	Pastor Hank Webb, Belmont 96 Church
Pastor James Mitchell, Polk New Liberty Baptist	Pastor Eric Byrom, Mansfield Grace Fellowship
Pastor Mark Meyer, Lexington Gracepoint Church	Pastor Russell Stanford, All Believers in Christ Church
Pastor Rich Hurles, Plymouth LifePoint Church	Pastor Steve Brennemen, Awakening Christian Ctr.
Pastor David Bates, Galion Unity Freewill	Pastor Chad Hayes, Mansfield Caeserea Baptist
Pastor Dink Porter, Mansfield Open Bible Church	Pastor Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist
Pastor Rick Lewis, Shelby Connect Church	Pastor Mark Wireman, Shiloh Pentecostal Church
Pastors Les & Grace Farley, Lexington Irresistible	Pastor LaMont Lindsay, Book of Life Church
Elder Moe Hill, Grace Evangelical Free Church	Deacon Derrell Hall, Mansfield Holiness Chapel
Pastor Kevin Evans, Ganges Liberty Lifesong	Pastor George Lewis, Shelby Temple of GOD
Pastor Brian Phillips, New Beginnings Freewill	Pastor David Parsons, Zion's Refuge Baptist
Pastor Larry Hill, Bethel Freewill Baptist	Pastor Brad Gentile, Shelby First Baptist
Pastor David Rentzel, Shelby Life Church	Pastor Dan Zediker, Mansfield Mission Point
Pastor Bobby Edwards, Jesus is Alive Holiness	Reverend El Akuchie, Godsfield House of Prayer
Pastor Walter Moss, Canton Foursquare Church	Pastor Wade Hartzell Shiloh Full Gospel
Pastor Steve Burkhalter, Ontario Potter's House	Pastor Joe Silvestri, Wooster Bible Church
Pastor William Cole, Mansfield Recovery Church	Pastor Tim Houston, Mansfield Church of GOD
Pastor Matt Potosky, Albion Church of Brethren	Pastor Troy Wooten, Christian Life Center
Pastor Rob Ratcliff, North Woodbury Freewill	Pastor Faron Cole, Eastern Road Church of GOD
Pastor David Holbrook, Warren Revival Center	Pastor Emeritus Steve Schag, Shelby Calvary Baptist
Pastor John Campos, Bowman St. Church of GOD	Pastor Duane Hennen, Cortland Maranatha Church
Pastor Sheldon Mencer, Mission 3:16 Church	Pastor Dana Gammill, Cathedral of Life Church
Dr. DeWayne Smith, Pricetown United Methodist	Dr. DeWayne Smith, Newton Falls United Methodist
Bishop Andy Keim, Perry Amish District 1	Bishop Chaz Boes, Compassion Church Toledo
Pastor Patrick Bailey, Butler North Bend Brethren	Pastor Patrick Bailey, Danville Church of Brethren
Pastor Matt Merendino, Clear Fork Alliance	Pastor Steve Baldrige, Rome Community Church
Pastor Jeremy Rands, Monclova Road Baptist	Pastor Robert Caw, Newark Church Triumphant
Bishop Sylvester Ginn, Ontario Hesus Agape	Pastor James Marshall, Ganges Community Church
Pastor Berry Carter, Massillon City Bible	Rabbi William Hallbrook, Ontario Sar Shalom Center
Pastor Jimmy Barnes, Mansfield Foursquare	Elder Henry Bradley, New Community Temple COGIC
Pastor Jim Johnson, Mansfield Grace Temple	Pastor Mark Cline, Berea Missionary Baptist
Pastor Larry Whited, Abundant Grace Fellowship	Elder James DeWeese, Mansfield Providence Church
Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren	Pastor Mike Rose, Hope on the Hill Chapel

Pastor Aaron Rose, Madison Fusion Church	Pastor David Koehler, Loudonville Baptist Temple
Pastor David Mahon, Galion Apostolic Assembly	Pastor Chris Spencer, Crestline Grace Baptist
Pastor Art Kennard, Maranatha Christian Center	Pastor Louis Blevins, Latter Rain Church of GOD in Christ
Rabbi Bob Bauer, Crestline Beit El Elyon	Pastor Paul Staton, Honeycreek Freewill Baptist
Pastor Ron Puff, Pleasant Valley Baptist	Pastor Joe Smith, Ontario Westside Baptist
Bishop Ben Gregg, Plymouth Church of GOD	Pastor Aaron Boggs, Fredericktown Free Will Baptist
Pastor Jonathan Moore, Grace Family Church	Pastor Hank Webb, Belmont Community Church
Pastor Taylor Howard, Apostolic Holiness Church	Pastor James Hill, Mansfield Paradise Church
Pastor Bill Fox, Crestline Faith Community	Overseer Dan Baer, Mansfield Gospel Assembly
Pastor Dan Baer, Green Gospel Assembly	Pastor Floyd Allen, Philippian Community Church
Pastor William Strader Jr., Bucyrus First Alliance	Pastor Charles Burgess Jr, West Salem Church of GOD
Pastor Jerry O'Brien, Orville Faith Harvest	Pastor Jason Price, Mansfield Victory Baptist
Pastor Ferlie Yates, Hanna Road Church of GOD	Pastor Rick Wiseman, Promised Land Fellowship
Pastor Nickolas Kelly, North Liberty Church	Pastor James Spencer, Mansfield Peoples' Baptist
Pastor Clarence Sanderfer, New Life Baptist	Pastor Paul Bartholomew, Mohican Church of the Brethren
Pastor John Grimm, Plymouth United Methodist	Pastor John Grimm, Greenwich United Methodist
Pastor David Natale, Warren Church & Healing Ctr.	Pastor Joe Nichols, ARC Empowerment Center
Pastor Robert Bird, Vermillion Baptist Church	Pastor Clyde Kerby, Hope & Healing Ministries
Pastor David Howell, Powerhouse Worship Center	Pastor Troy Thompson, Lorain Church on the North Coast
Pastor Matt Smith, Crestline Love Action Church	Pastor Clint Zeigler, Sovereign Christ Church
Pastor Paul Mathewson, Maranatha Bible Church	Pastor Danny Akers, Victory Rock Praise & Worship
Pastor Miler Montoya, Kingdom Vision Church	Pastor Jeremy Huff, Church of Jesus Christ
Pastor Greg Griffith, Willard Church of GOD	Pastor Richard Diamond, Diamond Hill Cathedral
Pastor Jack Williams, Walker Lake Baptist	Pastor Tim Sheets, Middletown Oasis Church
Pastor David Forbes, Columbus Christian Center	Pastor Gary Click, Fremont Baptist Temple

The above listed clergy co-signers have congregations located in 20 counties throughout Ohio. Counties with the most congregations represented: Richland (82), Ashland (9), Crawford (9), Trumbull (9), Wayne (7), Huron (4), Stark (4), Knox (3), Morrow (3), Lucas (2), Coshocton (1), Franklin (1), Licking (1), Lorain (1), Mahoning (1), Marion (1), Medina (1), Summit (1), Sandusky (1), & Warren (1)

References:

- (1) "Marijuana effects on simulated flying ability," by D S Janowsky, M P Meacham, J D Blaine, M Schoor, L P Bozzetti, Am J Psychiatry. 1976 Apr;13 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1267035/>
- (2) "Driving while stoned leads to more traffic accidents in a country where marijuana is legal ," by Sandee LaMotte, CNN, September 6, 2023 <https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/06/health/marijuana-traffic-accidents-wellness/index.html>
- (3) "Massive Danish study finds strong link between marijuana addiction and mental illness," by Calvin Freiburger, LifeSite News, May 15, 2023, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/massive-danish-study-finds-strong-link-between-pot-addiction-and-mental-illness/>
- (4) "Ex-deputy shot by pot grower asks for medical weed ban," by Emily Mills, Mansfield News Journal, September 5, 2017, <https://www.mansfieldnewsjournal.com/story/news/local/2017/09/05/ex-deputy-shot-pot-grower-asks-medical-weed-ban/636196001/>
- (5) "AAA Research Finds Fatal Crashes Involving Drivers Who Test Positive For Marijuana Increase After State Legalizes Drug," by Ragina Ali, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, January 8, 2020, <https://cluballiance.aaa.com/public-affairs/press-release/2020/md/md-wa-marijuana-20200130>
- (6) "Mackenzie Shirilla bragged about drug use on TikTok before killing boyfriend in 100-mph crash," by Patrick Reilly, New York Post, August 17, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/08/17/mackenzie-shirilla->

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(7) "Ontario council hears pro, con views on medical marijuana," by Linda Martz, Mansfield News Journal, March 2, 2017, <https://www.mansfieldnewsjournal.com/story/news/local/2017/03/02/ontario-council-hears-pro-con-views-medical-marijuana/98555064/>

(8) 'Morally Wrong': Ohio Clergymen Unite to Oppose Legalization of Marijuana in Buckeye State," by Andrea Morris, CBN News, May 3, 2022, <https://www2.cbn.com/news/us/morally-wrong-ohio-clergymen-unite-oppose-legalization-marijuana-buckeye-state>