



# COMMUNITY ACTION FOR CAPABLE YOUTH

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January 8, 2024

Dear Village of Bellville Council Members,

Community Action for Capable Youth, Inc. (CACY) has been the lead prevention agency for Richland County for over 46 years, working to develop, implement, facilitate, and coordinate violence, problem gambling, suicide, tobacco, alcohol, and drug prevention through educational activities. CACY is accredited by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. CACY's programs help to develop healthy, capable, caring young people who value themselves, others, and their community and who make positive, healthy lifestyle choices. In 2023, we facilitated prevention education in over 200 classrooms with an estimated 4,500 students served.

I am writing to express concern about the possibility of a marijuana dispensary being built within the Bellville community. It is important to carefully consider the impact this could have on the community's well-being. At a time when Ohio is experiencing a mental health crisis, violence on the rise and a record number of drug overdoses, we are deeply worried that a dispensary may increase drug availability in our community. Of particular concern, this dispensary poses the potential to increase youth marijuana use, increase addiction rates, and decrease the perception of harm.

One of our primary concerns is the potential impact on youth usage. Two risk factors for youth use include access and availability to substances and exposure to marketing of substances. Research indicates that the presence of marijuana dispensaries can contribute to an increase in adolescent curiosity and experimentation with cannabis. These establishments may also lead to more positive views of marijuana by creating perceptions of less harm and increased acceptability. We have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our youth and community. I urge Council to carefully consider the potential consequences and possible long-term impact on the community, particularly on children and teens. The following research demonstrates how substance use impacts youth, families and communities.

- Individuals who begin using marijuana before age 18 are up to 7 times more likely than adult initiators to develop a marijuana use disorder. Use of marijuana in the 12-17 age group shows double the incidence of a use disorder compared to nicotine, alcohol and most prescription drug misuse.
- Marijuana is addictive and may increase likelihood mental illness or exacerbate mental illness to include anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, psychosis, and schizophrenia. The link between marijuana and schizophrenia is stronger for those who begin use at an early age and more frequently.
- Marijuana use can severely affect brain development in youth, leading to problems in learning, memory, reaction time, and worsening mental health, academic, professional outcomes, and life satisfaction.
- Marijuana use has an association with other substance misuse and future addiction.

- Research suggests teens who see advertisements for marijuana are more likely to try the substance in the future.
- Communities have reported a dramatic increase in traffic deaths where drivers test positive for marijuana after it was legalized in locations for recreational use.
- The Ohio Poison Center reports the number of accidental poisonings reported increased significantly since medical marijuana sales began in early 2019. Based on research from other states with recreational marijuana, unintentional poisoning incidents involving children more than doubled after legalization.
- Jerome Adams, former U.S. Surgeon General, has noted, “Marijuana’s increasingly widespread availability in multiple and highly potent forms, coupled with a false and dangerous perception of safety among youth, merits a nationwide call to action.”

I kindly request that the council thoroughly assess the potential health impacts before making a decision on the establishment of a marijuana dispensary in the Bellville community. I appreciate your time and careful consideration. I hope that together we can continue working to protect our youth and keep our community safe and healthy. If you need any further information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brandy Marquette". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brandy Marquette, OCPC  
Executive Director  
Community Action for Capable Youth  
[www.cacyohio.org](http://www.cacyohio.org)