



# COMMUNITY ACTION FOR CAPABLE YOUTH

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June 17, 2024

Mayor Jody Perry and City Council Members Scott, Burns, Meier, Akuchie, Daley, Diaz, Mount, Falquette, and Zader  
30 N Diamond Street  
Mansfield, Ohio 44903

Re: Potential Economic and Societal Impact of Cannabis Retail Business on the Mansfield Community

Dear Mayor Perry and Council Members,

CACY comes to you again to provide additional information regarding the potential negative economic and societal impacts of allowing a cannabis (marijuana) business in our community. The CACY (Community Action for Capable Youth) organization, which has been a Mansfield City fixture for more than 46 years, would like to focus even more attention on the potential harm if marijuana retail businesses operate within the City of Mansfield. I, as a business director with more than 35 years of professional experience with an advanced business degree, would like to focus on economic considerations which have not been fully explored during your meetings.

The following are some verifiable facts worth emphasizing as you consider pending legislation:

- Richland County Ohio voters **voted DOWN** the state of Ohio Issue 2 in November 2023- Despite frequent comments about Ohio voters approving Issue 2, that is not the case for Richland County voters.
- The U.S. Corridor Comprehensive Economic Development Action Plan (2022) which includes goals and strategies adopted by Richland County to attract a “home to grow a well-skilled workforce.” It highlights attracting jobs in high-tech industries including cyber-security, new vehicle technologies, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), precision agriculture and those in high technology--specifically impacting job creation in high-wage occupations. These are clearly targeted industries to achieve Richland County’s vision of increased human talent and material revenue. None of these strategies align with the attraction of cannabis retailers or to encourage the use and effects of cannabis (marijuana) which has short-term effects on workers such as memory and learning problems, and loss of coordination. In long term, cannabis affects brain development and can severely impair mental functioning and its associated impact on mental illness (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). For the approved economic action plan to come to fruition and benefit the citizens of Mansfield and

Richland County, it would be unwise and shortsighted to undermine the quality of our workforce and economic base, which would be counterproductive for generations to come.

- New opportunities and existing employers are building up Ohio's economy which adhere to federal Drug Free Workplace policies and restrict the consumption of cannabis and other drugs by their employees. They need support for continued premium discounts.
- According to a study by the National Institute of Drug Abuse, employees who tested positive for cannabis (marijuana) had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those workers who tested negative. An increase in the number of cannabis (marijuana) users can translate to greater safety risks for coworkers and decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, safety issues and liability for employers (Wolfrom, 2020). We must support existing employers for them to want to remain operable and profitable in our community.
- Cannabis (marijuana) continues to be classified as a Schedule I drug (high potential for abuse). Even *if* The Federal Register acts on a recent presidential request to reclassify the substance to a Schedule III substance (intermediate potential for abuse), it will require a lengthy approval process with formal rule-making procedures as well as granting of oversight by the Food and Drug Administration, which may negate the current method of dispensing the substance (CRS, 2024).
- In a clinical study of brick-and-mortar cannabis (marijuana) retail storefronts and verifiable licenses, approximately 20% of the outlet were no longer operable (Pedersen, E et al., 2020). This lends to the uncertainty if a retail business will even remain in a community once it infiltrates it. The same study found 40% of cannabis outlets had a tobacco/nicotine outlet within sight of the cannabis outlet. Such co-use of cannabis and tobacco/nicotine has been found to be a substantial health concern to consumers.
- Currently cannabis (marijuana) based businesses are not entitled to federal bankruptcy protections related to Section 1129 of the US Bankruptcy Code since they violate the federal Controlled Substances Act. This may put our community more at risk for abandoned storefronts and blight.

Additionally, if we are to learn from other communities who have now experienced for some time the full economic and societal impact of cannabis retailers and consumer use in their community, we should review the following outcomes experienced by their communities:

- Marijuana is the most frequently detected drug (other than alcohol) in crash involved drivers. Evidence has shown that marijuana impairs almost every aspect of performance associated with safe driving.
- A review of 48 relevant studies found marijuana use to be associated with reduced educational attainment. Allowing more accessibility of cannabis (marijuana) in our community would undermine the goal for a more educated Richland County workforce and may lead to increased "brain drain" (movement of educated and skilled workforce to other areas).

- Men who smoked marijuana as little as once per week doubled a couple's risk of miscarriage according to new research out of Boston University School of Public Health. This impact has the potential to increase medical and clinical care costs in a community.
- Use of cannabis (marijuana) among 18 to 25-year-old has increased, largely driven by proximity to the product. Advertisement and proximity to retailers has a significant impact on use.
- Increased levels of cannabis (marijuana) use was observed in the population in areas of greater cannabis retail presence (Everson et al 2019, Pederson et al., 2020).

It is only through confident, thoughtful, stakeholders who understand that helping adults, families and children learn and grow throughout their lifetime by providing a safe and protective community, creates a favorable environment for families to raise healthy and productive children and want to maintain roots in a safe and productive community. Those families produce buying power. This can only be accomplished by averting new threats to our community. This begs the question, why would a cannabis (marijuana) retailer target the City of Mansfield to develop a cannabis retail business? The short answer is, Richland County has a vulnerable consumer based due to increased risk of violence, suicide and drug use. That is never good news for a community. Cannabis retail businesses, like many other industries, target demographic categories where they believe they can be successful. Cannabis retailers have taken a page from the tobacco and vaping marketing playbook and focus on messaging, packaging and advertisement. For example, in a recent state by state cannabis marketing guide produced by a cannabis retail consulting company, the guide gave marketing tips for each consumer demographic era. Marketing tips included partnering with influencers and offering discounts. They encouraged those interested in developing retail cannabis sales to target a specific age era the most and which ones to target the least due to their "value on information before purchases." Ironically, the demographic era retailers recommended to target the most is also the one Richland County hopes to lead our community into a productive economic future. If we take heed from reputable clinical studies, the one may cancel the other out.

It is important to pause here and remind you that we are not talking about a product that has a benign effect on its consumer or the people that care about them. The reality is, that most people are not using cannabis (marijuana). Yes, that is statistically true. Let us not fall for the misconception that a smaller group may be reflective of a larger world view. In fact, there are many adults, families and youth who have researched on their own or have been affected by a loved one's substance use which has propelled them to a healthier and/ or federally approved choice.

As a professional mental health organization specializing in prevention and early intervention, CACY has worked diligently to build pro-social skills, knowledge, social conscience, confidence and character in Richland County citizens; most importantly in the City of Mansfield. We, along with other community partners like treatment agencies and law enforcement, have made some gains in addressing our community drug overdoses and mental health issues through a coordinated, comprehensive, community-wide effort. This effort has been done with the assumption our local communities will not undermine that work through rules, codes or laws

which can directly impact the immediate flow of substances to our community. We wish to caution the gatekeepers of the quality of life for our citizens in that individuals or companies who only look at projected economic factors of business decisions which may come from inflated economic projections and misinformation, may likely create a negative-cost impact to other areas such as education, mental health care, workforce quality, and law enforcement engagement. CACY's goal is to provide you with real data related to the product and business practices being proposed to be sold in our community and its likely far-reaching impact.

I am happy to provide additional information or answer questions. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide information to assist in protecting our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracee Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Tracee Anderson  
Executive Director