

November 19, 2024

Ontario City Council
555 Stumbo Road
Ontario, Ohio 44906
Sent via email: Council@ontarioohio.org

Dear Council President Eddie Gallo,

It is our understanding City Council is scheduled to vote to prohibit commercial cannabis inside city limits November 20th. According to Chapter 3780 of the Ohio Revised Code, the only legal remedy local jurisdictions have is to prohibit commercial marijuana.

Historically the faith community has gone on record opposing the legalization of marijuana. Lead clergy have repeatedly warned about the dangers of increasing the availability of marijuana to vulnerable addicts and young children.

Recently data from the Central Ohio Poison Center confirms the number of accidental marijuana exposures in Ohio has steadily increased in children 12 years old and under. In 2024, accidental marijuana exposures in children 5 years old and under are more than five times what they were five years ago, according to the Ohio Poison Centers. Medical experts say they expected an increase in these numbers with the recent legalization of recreational marijuana.

As of October 10th of this year, there have been nearly 600 accidental exposures of marijuana to children 12 years old and under in Ohio. Three-fourths of those cases involved children under the age of 5. (1) As faith leaders, we find it detestable when people with the power to minimize this evil, dismiss the toxic poisoning and corruption of our youth.

We are reminded in March 2017 when 4 Ontario students were suspended and 3 faced expulsions for their involvement in the distribution of cannabis cookies. (2) Allowing the Marijuana Industry into our community will increase accessibility to this harmful substance, and increase juvenile delinquency.

The Bible says in Matthew 18, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."

As 8 lead clergymen and stakeholders in the Ontario community, we are urging Ontario City Council to protect our children and VOTE YES to the moratorium prohibiting commercial cannabis indefinitely.

Sincerely,

Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren, 1905 N. Lex Springmill Road
Pastor Steve Burkhalter, Ontario Potter's House, 374 Willowood Drive E
Pastor Ken Ginter Jr., Ontario Abundant Life Tabernacle, 1085 Bedford Boulevard
Pastor Jack Williams, Walker Lake Baptist Church, 1602 Walker Lake Road
Pastor Diego Sandino, Ontario First Wesleyan Church, 1908 Park Avenue W
Rabbi William Hallbrook, Ontario Sar Shalom Center, 2510 West Fourth Street
Pastor Joe Smith, Ontario Westside Baptist Church, 3720 West Fourth Street
Bishop Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Ministries, 1034 Walcrest Drive

(1) "Data shows yearly increase in accidental marijuana exposures in Ohio children under 12," October 22, 2024, 10TV WBNS, <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/local/data-shows-yearly-increase-accidental-marijuana-exposures-in-ohio-children-under-12/530-e1defc0b-e252-4c8f-a87c-9d73fd4de490>

(2) "Students face expulsion over alleged pot cookies," by Courtney McNaull, March 28, 2017, Mansfield News Journal, <https://www.mansfieldnewsjournal.com/story/news/local/2017/03/27/ontario-students-face-expulsion-over-alleged-pot-cookies/99693582/>