

OPEN CLERGY LETTER TO CRESTLINE VOTERS:

The faith community has served the resilient citizens of Crestline addressing the physical and spiritual needs of our beloved blue-collar community. As community stakeholders, we have engaged the drug addiction calamity prior to the Opioid Crisis and will continue assisting families even after. Our family culture is at a crossroads, and May 6th may determine what kind of future we will have.

Local voters will be asked if the Village of Crestline should ‘permit the establishment and operation of an adult cannabis (marijuana) dispensary within the Village of Crestline and whether to direct Village Council to enact legislation regulating the operation of such dispensary.’

Although Ohioans voted to legalize marijuana in 2023, 53% of Crawford County voters opposed the legalization of mind-altering marijuana. According to Chapter 3780.25 of the Ohio Revised Code, the only legal remedy local jurisdictions have is to prohibit commercial marijuana facilities. Presently there are at least 122 communities that prohibit mind-altering marijuana, including 18 of 27 government jurisdictions in nearby Richland County, Ohio. (1)

We believe revenue from the cannabis industry must never take precedent over the security and sanctity of the family. Marijuana is closely associated with psychosis and schizophrenia. (2) Since its legalization in Ohio, a spike in child-poisonings has been seen. Mind-altering marijuana with high levels of THC also impairs individuals with ‘the tunnel vision of addiction,’ sidetracks the productivity and motivation of the workforce, (3) and derails public health and safety. Allowing Marijuana cartels to profit off the suffering of our community is not acceptable-commercial cannabis will only add to the trauma in our neighborhoods.

A study conducted by the liberal-leaning University of Colorado Denver found between 2012-2015, neighborhoods with one or more medical or recreational dispensaries saw increased crime rates between 26 and 1,452 percent higher than in neighborhoods without any commercial marijuana activity. (4) Crimes included: aggravated assault, burglary, drug and alcohol offenses, and robbery.

Marijuana will steal, kill, and destroy. If our community accepts this dangerous drug that is still illegal at the federal level, it will steal the future of many. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” If our community chooses wisely, these verses can apply to our beloved community. In fact, this is the favorite Bible passage of Crestline legend, Mike Gottfried.

We want Crestline to remain a family-friendly town and to not go off the rails. As nine (9) area lead clergy, we encourage Crestline voters on Tuesday, May 6th to “VOTE NO” and oppose commercial marijuana. We want to send a signal to Village Council that marijuana should not be normalized.

Sincerely,

Pastor Josh Cole, Praise Generation Church
Pastor Bill Fox, Faith Community Church
Pastor Brian Lavelle, House of Grace Church
Pastor J.C. Church, Victory in Truth Ministries
Evangelist Johnny Cox, Crestline Church of Christ

Rabbi Bob Bauer, Beit El Elyon Congregation
Pastor Christopher Spencer, Grace Baptist Church
Pastor Bob Weaver, Crestline Church of Nazarene
Pastor Rodney Noblit, Heritage Baptist Church

References:

- (1) Local Moratoriums for Ohio Adult Use Marijuana Operators as of March 20, 2025, Moritz College of Law, <https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/faculty-and-research/drug-enforcement-and-policy-center/research-and-grants/policy-and-data-analyses/ohio-marijuana-moratoriums>
- (2) “Richland & Ashland County officials warn of dangers from cannabis: “Users may develop paranoia” (VIDEO),” Frontlines Ohio, May 30, 2024, <https://frontlinesohio.com/index.php/2024/05/30/richland-ashland-county-officials-warn-of-dangers-from-cannabis-users-may-develop-paranoia-video/>
- (3) “With eye on workforce, Shelby nips cannabis in the bud & prohibits commercial use,” by Frontlines Ohio, February 26, 2024, <https://frontlinesohio.com/index.php/2024/02/26/with-eye-on-the-workforce-shelby-nips-cannabis-in-the-bud-prohibits-commercial-use/>
- (4) “Do marijuana dispensaries increase neighborhood crime? Researchers study Denver neighborhoods post 2014 legalization, by Hughes, L, Schaible, LM, and Jimmerson, K (University of Colorado Denver), February 20, 2019, <https://news.ucdenver.edu/do-marijuana-dispensaries-increase-neighborhood-crime/>