



Catholic Conference  
of Illinois

65 E. Wacker Place  
Suite 1620  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Ph. 312-368-1066  
Fx. 312-368-1090

108 E. Cook St.  
Springfield, IL 62704  
Ph. 217-528-9200  
Fx. 217-528-7214

[www.ilcatholic.org](http://www.ilcatholic.org)  
Diocese of Belleville  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
Diocese of Joliet  
Diocese of Peoria  
Diocese of Rockford  
Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

Spring 2019

## Illinois Bishops Advise Against Legalization of Marijuana

Legislation that would legalize marijuana for recreational use will be considered in the Illinois General Assembly. The Catholic bishops of Illinois are committed to the common good, and therefore advise against legalization.

Data collected by government agencies and public-interest groups document that drug use is rampant in modern society. Just a few years ago, we heard too many stories of children turned into orphans after their parents overdosed on heroin. Today, we hear of the opioid crisis and the lives it claims. If marijuana is legalized, it will only add to the problem.

Proponents of legalization say marijuana is not addictive, yet peer-reviewed research concludes that it is. Proponents also say that most people who use marijuana will not move on to harder drugs, yet other studies note that most people who are addicted to other drugs started with alcohol and marijuana.

Advocates of legalization rightly point to the racial disparity of our jail and prison populations, noting that marijuana infractions often lead to lives trapped in the criminal justice system. We recognize the truth of that premise, while observing that recent sentencing reforms should soon reverse that trend, since possession of less than 10 grams of marijuana now results in a ticket of up to \$200 and no jail time.

Medical marijuana dispensaries already exist across Illinois, ready to be converted into retail stores for customers 21 and older, leading proponents to predict that legalization will eradicate the black market. Will that actually happen, or will the black market simply sell marijuana at a lower price and to those under age?

As lawmakers consider this issue, it is important to remember they are not only debating legalization of marijuana, but also commercialization of a drug into an industry the state will profit from. In seeking the common good, the state should protect its citizens.

We ask lawmakers to say “no” to legalization of marijuana, as Pope Francis explained in 2014 when speaking about marijuana and other recreational drugs: “... To say this ‘no,’ one has to say ‘yes’ to life, ‘yes’ to love, ‘yes’ to others, ‘yes’ to education, ‘yes’ to greater job opportunities. If we say ‘yes’ to all these things, there will be no room for illicit drugs, for alcohol abuse, for other forms of addiction.”

#####