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**Vermont Medical Society Calls for Commercial Cannabis Potency Limits, No Advertising and for Warning Labels to Include Mental Health Risks**

**MONTPELIER – November 30, 2021** – The Vermont Medical Society (VMS), which represents 2,400 physicians and physician assistants across Vermont, has adopted [a policy resolution](#) urging the Vermont Cannabis Control Board and the Vermont legislature to require that all cannabis grown, produced or sold in the state contain less than 15% THC. The VMS policy also opposes all cannabis advertising and advocates for all cannabis products and advertising to list evidence-based health risks associated with cannabis use including psychosis and suicide attempts in persons with no prior mental health history, uncontrollable vomiting, dangerous driving, addiction, and harm to fetuses and nursing babies.

These public health and mental health risks are of immediate concern, as Vermont currently has the nation's highest past month cannabis use, including use of high potency (greater than 15% THC) products. Evidence shows cannabis use, especially with potency greater than 15% THC is associated with increased urgent and emergency department psychiatric visits and increased mental health disorders, including psychosis. It is also associated with increased urgent non-psychiatric visits for respiratory distress, cannabis hyperemesis syndrome (uncontrollable vomiting) and poisonings.

However, in Vermont, there is a significant, inappropriately low perception of harm of cannabis use. Many Vermonters associate legalized cannabis sales with marijuana from the 1990s, when the THC levels were less than 2%. Yet, in states like Colorado and Washington, where commercial cannabis sales have already been legalized, THC potency has dramatically increased, with averages for marijuana flower ranging from 17-28% and for concentrates, such as dabs and waxes, as high as 90% THC.

The Vermont Cannabis Control Board (CCB) is currently drafting proposed regulations in order to implement Vermont's commercialized market for cannabis sales, which are slated to begin in fall of 2022. Last week, the CCB released [proposed rules](#), which include draft warning label language that leaves out all mention of serious mental health effects associated with cannabis use including the increased risk of addiction, anxiety, psychosis, suicide attempt or self-injurious behavior.

VMS President and psychiatrist, Simi Ravven, MD, stated, "At a time when Vermonters are facing filled hospital beds, crowded emergency departments and prolonged wait times for in-patient mental health treatment, Vermont's medical professionals believe

Vermonters deserve accurate information about the risks of cannabis use and should not have commercial access to high-risk, high-potency products.”

The VMS policy also urges the Vermont CCB and state leaders to dedicate adequate resources to statewide prevention and education efforts that include: cannabis use prevention and education at schools and in underserved communities; evidence-based afterschool activities to decrease high risk behaviors among adolescents; treatment of cannabis use disorder; and informing state leaders, the media and the public of the increased cost and burden to our health care system caused by cannabis use, especially greater than 15% THC cannabis use, including ER crowding and overburdening, cannabis addiction, psychosis, suicide attempt or self-injurious behavior, mental illness, cannabis vomiting syndrome, child poisoning, and driving injuries.

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The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to optimizing the health of all Vermonters and the health care environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit [www.VTMD.org](http://www.VTMD.org)