

Town of



Amherst Massachusetts

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## RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA TALKING POINTS

Amherst is committed to a safe and deliberate implementation of the recreational marijuana law that both protects the health and safety of Amherst residents and respects the 74% of Amherst voters who approved the ballot question. 65% of Amherst residents are below the age of 25, and over 30% are under the age of 20. Amherst's population is in constant flux, with nearly 5,000 new undergraduate college students arriving at UMass, Amherst College, and Hampshire College each year.

### Tools We Need

- **Flexible local option tax:** 2% will not cover all local educational and enforcement expenses related to the smooth and successful implementation of recreational marijuana use.
- **Time to enact local zoning for this new use:** A thoughtful zoning bylaw cannot be accepted by 2/3 of Representative Town Meeting three months *before* final regulations are promulgated.
- **Local control over retail licensing:** Unlike the regulation of tobacco and alcohol, both of which have robust mechanisms for local control, the recreational marijuana law does not provide municipalities with a similar ability to make decisions on individual retail proposals.
- **Local ability to control signage:** Municipalities already effectively regulate retail signage as it fits with the character of their community, not under a one size fits all state standard.

### Support We Need

- **Stronger public health provisions:** On dosage, serving size, packaging, and labeling to reduce marijuana overconsumption.
- **Broader membership of the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) and Cannabis Advisory Board (CAB):** Include municipal public health and municipal public safety perspectives.
- **Clarify ambiguous terms:** The ballot question language is full of ambiguities and what appear to be conflicting provisions.
- **No *automatic* allowance of any medical dispensaries to sell recreationally:** Establishments who have not yet actually provided medical marijuana treatment in Massachusetts are not experienced operators. When Amherst provided letters of support for four medical marijuana dispensaries, we had no reason to anticipate that any of these medical facilities would be allowed to sell for recreational use without some additional local licensing process. Each of the four has received their provisional certificates of registration from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Two have received a conditional special permit that allows only the sale of medical marijuana and requires signing a Host Community Agreement with the Town; we are currently negotiating the terms of the Host Community Agreement with one of those two dispensaries.