



CITY OF NEW YORK
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD
FOUR**

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JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

February 28, 2024

Hon. Kathy Hochul
Governor
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Youth and Cannabis Use

Dear Governor Hochul,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 7, 2024, voted 36 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, in favor of allocating New York State tax revenue from the sale of cannabis to programs that help curb drug use in minors. We are grateful for the participation of panelists at the Arts, Culture, Education, Schools (ACES) Committee forum on Cannabis, Drug Use & Youth that replaced its regularly scheduled meeting on December 11, 2023. Panelists included:

- Kelly McGuire, Superintendent, New York City Department of Education, District 2
- Dr. Yasmin Hurd, Director of the Addiction Institute at Mount Sinai Health System
- Dasheeda Dawson, Founding Director of Cannabis NYC
- Kellyeann Royce-Giron, Administrative Assistant Superintendent/Senior Program Manager Prevention and Intervention Programs Office of Safety and Youth Development at the DOE
- Alex Laraia, 2023 Graduate of New York City Public Schools

New York City Public Schools have seen an increase in student drug use in middle and high schools. In 2023, Chalkbeat stated, "Reports of "controlled substances" and drug paraphernalia found on students at school were up 8% so far this year compared to the same period in 2019, according to the data, even though the K-12 student population has

fallen by 11% in that time.”¹ While drug use in minors is not new, the accessibility of drugs, the way in which drugs are consumed, and the stress that our youth are experiencing have created a “perfect storm” contributing to the rise in drug use. Minors can purchase drugs from street corners and some illegal smoke shops in easy to conceal forms such as vape cartridges and gummies. These forms of cannabis consumption are particularly appealing to youth as they come in multiple flavors, attractive packaging, and can be quickly ingested in school stairwells, bathrooms and even classrooms. Many students use drugs to cope with anxiety and depression brought on by a host of factors including but not limited to social and financial stressors, post pandemic trauma, school performance, and social media. Schools are also seeing an uptick in drug use among middle school students who “just want to try it” with insufficient education on what they are consuming.

Today’s cannabis and cannabinoids sold on the streets and smoke shops are far more potent than the cannabis derived from the flower that most adults’ associate cannabis to come from. The plant has been muted to such extents that there are only hybrid strains that remain today. Dr. Hurd stated that, “to circumvent federal and state laws regarding Delta 9 THC, many companies are using synthetics to make cannabis derivatives” that are High-THC (and low-CBD) which is preferred among recreational users. This high concentration ratio of THC to CBD has a “52-fold difference” than the original plant. Vaping further increases the amount of THC taken into the body by 20-50% compared to ingestion by smoking joints. The Addiction Institute at Mount Sinai study’s *Effects of Cannabis on Neurodevelopment* shows that cannabis use during middle to late adolescence is associated with “an accelerated cortical thinning” of the brain enhancing risky behavior and impulsivity in youth. The study also shows that “high-potency cannabis is associated with a greater risk of psychotic symptoms, depression, anxiety, and Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD).” The highest risk of CUD is among individuals who begin using cannabis prior to the age of 16.

The high potency, early use, frequency of use and easy access to cannabis and cannabinoids has created an urgent need for more education on the risks of drug use. While we are encouraged that the city in partnership with the New York Housing Authority, the Mayor’s Department of Equity, and the Sheriff’s Office is undertaking conversations around cannabis laws, dosing, and titration, the *Lift Off!* Cannabis Listening Tour is not enough to educate and support the 1M students in New York City Public Schools. The New York City Department of Education has a mere 266 substance abuse specialists for the entire school system when the DOE previously had close to 1,200 specialists.

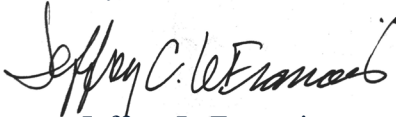
CB4 is requesting that the state allocate more tax revenue earned from cannabis sales to fund more initiatives that help educate and support school communities and students at all ages. Of the 5M in cannabis tax revenue currently earned weekly by the state, only 20% goes to substance abuse and mental health programs and 40% to communities disproportionately affected and general education. Initiatives in need of funding include:

¹ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/1/4/23537654/marijuana-use-teens-smoking-weed-mental-health-nyc-schools-students/#:~:text=At%20the%20same%20time%2C%20the,starting%20at%20a%20younger%20age.>

- A substantial increase in Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Specialists (SAPIS) at the DOE.
- Education for teachers and other school staff on cannabis and cannabinoids.
- Social emotional support for Pre-K - 8th grade to develop strategies to cope with stress at an earlier age.
- Increase efforts to close unlicensed cannabis shops & public awareness on laws prohibiting sales to minors.
- A working group comprised of the Mayor's Office, Department of Education, Administration for Children's Services, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, community leaders, and other relevant agencies to share knowledge and support one another in a rapidly growing and changing market.

As New York State becomes a global leader in the cannabis industry, it is imperative that local Community Boards have input on the management of New York City's cannabis market. CB4 is committed to working with the state and city government to help ensure a healthy, well informed, and equitable New York.

Sincerely,



Jeffery LeFrancois
Chair
Community Board 4



Matt Green
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Josephine Ishmon
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

- CC: Hon. Eric Adams, Mayor
 Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, State Senator
 Hon. Liz Kreuger, State Senator
 Hon. Tony Simone, State Assembly Member
 Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
 Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
 Hon. Gale A. Brewer, City Council