

Statement of the Missouri Catholic Conference on Amendment 3 (Recreational Marijuana)

We, the Catholic Bishops of Missouri, issue this statement to express our concerns with Amendment 3, which would legalize the recreational use of marijuana in the state. We believe that marijuana legalization will negatively impact Missouri families, health outcomes, communities, and workers.

While some are focused on the increased state revenues that will be generated by a taxable marijuana industry, we are concerned with the social costs of increased marijuana usage. Although usage will be restricted to age 21 and older, legalization sends the message that marijuana is safe and socially acceptable. Many states that have legalized marijuana have the highest teen usage rates. We know that regular marijuana use has been connected to respiratory problems; mental health issues (including increased anxiety and suicidal thoughts); and learning, memory, and attention loss.

We are also concerned with how legalization could impact the state's workforce. In addition to impacting worker productivity and safety, increased marijuana use could hinder individuals' ability to find or keep meaningful employment, especially in jobs that require drug testing.

Pope Francis has said that reducing drug addiction "will not be achieved by the liberalization of drug use." Instead, we must address those underlying social and economic issues that can lead to substance abuse. For these reasons, we urge Catholics and all persons of good will to oppose Amendment 3.

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Approved September 30, 2022