

## **#PowerToWeThePeople 2018 Cannabis Policy Platform**

Prohibition is a failed policy. Tara Samples and I advocate for replacing the disastrous War on Drugs with policies rooted in evidence, compassion, and justice for all Ohioans. Thirty states and Washington, DC, have enacted policy specific to the physician-authorized use of cannabis, while an estimated 63 million Americans now reside in jurisdictions where anyone over the age of 21 may possess cannabis legally.<sup>1</sup> As governor and lieutenant governor, Tara L. Samples and I aim to:

**Expand Ohio's Medical Marijuana Law**  
**Allow Home Cultivation by Patients & Caregivers**  
**Use Cannabis to Reduce Opioid Abuse**  
**Treat Not Jail**  
**Restore Communities Most Affected by the War on Drugs**  
**Deschedule & Pass Common Sense Adult-Use Policy**  
**Enable Participation of Small Businesses & Communities of Color**  
**Use Tax Revenue for Public Health**  
**Allow Ohio Farmers to Grow Industrial Hemp**

A functioning, compassionate medical cannabis program should be patient-centered to increase access and safety. As we **Expand Ohio's Medical Marijuana Law**, we must stop treating patients like criminals. Education and access to high-quality medical cannabis should be readily available to patients, caregivers, and healthcare systems. The state should actively encourage and incentivize our medical community and research institutions to become educated in order to serve the patient population. There should not be any repercussions against patients who wish to explore medical cannabis as a treatment option, especially our veteran community. Students should not have their financial aid threatened or denied if they choose cannabis as a treatment option. People have the right to control their own health care and make their own health care choices. The law should **Allow Home Cultivation by Patients & Caregivers** to increase access in the absence of an adequate number of dispensaries for Ohio's patient population and create a safe, affordable option to purchasing in a limited, uncertain market.

Everyday that Ohioans go without access to medical cannabis, the state adds to its body count of opioid overdose deaths, many of which started with a legal prescription for painkillers. The DEA knows there has never been a single fatal overdose from cannabis use as published in their "Drugs of Abuse" report.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing body of state- and federally-funded research that demands we **Use Cannabis to Reduce Opioid Abuse**. Building upon earlier research,<sup>3</sup> a peer-reviewed study recently published in the Journal of Health Economics funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse<sup>4</sup> found that states that have a marijuana law with a legal, operational dispensary provision show a statistically significant decline in opioid overdose death rates of about 25%.<sup>5</sup> According to another

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<sup>1</sup> <http://norml.org/action-center/item/the-marijuana-justice-act-of-2017-introduced>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thecannabist.co/2017/07/12/marijuana-overdose-statistics-dea/83506/>

[https://www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug\\_of\\_abuse.pdf](https://www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug_of_abuse.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1898878>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167629617311852>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.marijuanamoment.net/medical-marijuana-dispensaries-save-lives-study-finds/>

recent study published by the Minnesota Department of Health,<sup>6</sup> out of the patients known to be taking opiate painkillers upon their enrollment into the state medical cannabis program, 63% were able to reduce or eliminate opioid usage after six months.<sup>7</sup>

We must stop treating those who are afflicted by addiction like criminals. We must **Treat Not Jail** and stop the warehousing of non-violent offenders. There will be a renewed emphasis on rehabilitation that provides non-violent offenders with reasonable and appropriate opportunities to rejoin society, to find jobs, and get an education - to break the cycles of trauma that lead to addiction. Those who have paid their debt to society should not have to continue to pay over and over. We will also significantly increase investment in programs that help those in jail participate in job training and other educational programs to enhance their ability to successfully reintegrate into society. We will take necessary steps to reinstate state voting rights and ensuring funds for education for facilitating voting rights restoration. We will also make it mandatory that state prisons offer mental health, and, if appropriate, addiction treatment services for all inmates, regardless of offense. At the local level, we will review the circumstances of those being held in county jails to ensure that they are not being used as warehouses for the mentally ill, homeless, or otherwise disadvantaged citizens. Jails are not appropriate places to hold nonviolent offenders with mental illness. Mental illness is a public health issue, not one of criminality.

We must **Restore Communities Most Affected by the War on Drugs**. The criminal justice system, in Ohio as well as nationally, has a shameful record of disproportionately targeting, prosecuting, jailing, and otherwise discriminating against the African American and Latino communities. In Ohio, people of color are more than four times more likely than whites to be arrested for “marijuana” possession.<sup>8</sup> A system of “injustice” strips people of their freedoms based on color, class, or geography; it also institutionalizes the permanent, lifelong imposition of negative consequences that affect family stability, employment, civil rights, voting rights, and any semblance of “equal opportunity.” Ohio spends on average \$100M annually on “marijuana” possession enforcement<sup>9</sup> and with continued decriminalization efforts, we will be using those resources to restore these communities. We will incentivize our communities and law enforcement to mitigate existing and ongoing racial disparities in “marijuana” arrests and create a community reinvestment fund to invest in communities most impacted by the failed War on Drugs. We will work to expunge convictions specific to “marijuana” possession and non-violent offenses and allow individuals currently serving time in prison for “marijuana-related” violations to petition the court for resentencing. Using cannabis or having a “marijuana” charge on an individual's record should not keep them from accessing the means to a higher quality of life, or benefits such as student loans or housing. Ending prohibition should mean that everyone's quality of life goes up, not just those who weren't discriminated against by the War on Drugs. If we are going to have a legal market, cannabis career opportunities should be made available to everyone.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.health.state.mn.us/topics/cannabis/about/ipreport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/376643-new-studies-show-that-legal-cannabis-access-reduces-opioid-abuse>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/report/report-war-marijuana-black-and-white?redirect=criminal-law-reform/war-marijuana-black-and-white>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/report/report-war-marijuana-black-and-white?redirect=criminal-law-reform/war-marijuana-black-and-white>

“Marijuana” should be removed from the Schedule of Controlled Substances entirely, at the state and federal level, as it is safer than tobacco and alcohol, neither of which are scheduled. We will explore options to **Deschedule & Pass Common Sense Adult-Use Policy** that will **Enable Participation of Small Businesses & Communities of Color**. The legalization of cannabis use for adults 21 and over should be regulated similarly to alcohol. Cannabis businesses should be licensed by the state, with fair barriers to entry into the industry to allow small businesses to flourish and participate in community health initiatives. The regulations and application process should not cater to special interests, and should be unbiased and cultivate opportunity for those communities disproportionately affected by the War on Drugs. The product itself should be tested for both quality and safety. Strict measures to prevent diversion and sales to minors should be in place. Adults should be able to grow their own cannabis in a locked and secured area. We will convene a bipartisan panel of community activists and experts to develop a plan to move toward responsible legalization and taxation of adult-use marijuana in Ohio and **Use Tax Revenue for Public Health** initiatives and other valuable public programs for the state. Colorado has earned more than \$500M in tax revenue since the implementation of their law in 2014,<sup>10</sup> and Nevada’s new program implemented July 2017 made \$30M in tax revenue in six months.<sup>11</sup> Ohio cannot afford to miss out on this revenue

As we look to expand our rural economy also impacted by the failed policies of prohibition, we will **Allow Ohio Farmers to Grow Industrial Hemp**. Hemp has remarkable health and wellness benefits and has the potential to build and restore soil health, while earning farmers more per acre than other agriculture commodities.<sup>12</sup> The US is the largest consumer of Industrial Hemp as it is legal to buy, sell, and consume—but not fully legal to cultivate without a permit. Domestic cultivation is permitted by the 2014 Farm Bill, and every state around us is moving forward with federally-approved research as their state policies support this development. Hemp was legally defined by congress as all parts of the hemp plant, whether growing or not, that have less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) by dry weight, as distinct from marijuana.<sup>13</sup> Ohio’s agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, energy, environmental management, and public health sectors will greatly benefit by collaborating with neighboring state programs and sharing the developing research on cultivation, processing, marketing, and interstate commerce of hemp products in our region and beyond. We will be educating law enforcement on the differences between legal hemp products and other types of cannabis products to protect consumers. We will work with members of the state’s Congressional delegation to enact appropriate measures as cannabis regulation requires changes in federal policies or statutes.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://money.cnn.com/2017/07/19/news/colorado-marijuana-tax-revenue/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/monazhang/2018/02/26/nevada-makes-30-million-in-marijuana-taxes-during-first-six-months-of-sales/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.agweb.com/article/colorado-farmer-shatters-hemp-fiber-ceiling-naa-chris-bennett/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thecannabist.co/2017/06/08/hemp-products-united-states-farming/80796/>