



## KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

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**Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs**  
February 20, 2017

**Neutral Testimony:**  
**A Health Impact Assessment on**  
**Legalization of Medical Marijuana in Kansas**

Senate Bill 155

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*To improve the health of all Kansans by supporting effective policymaking, engaging at the state and community levels, and providing nonpartisan, actionable and evidence-based information.*

*Informing Policy. Improving Health.*

Chairman LaTurner and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Sarah Hartsig and I am a senior analyst at the Kansas Health Institute, where I participate in work on community health improvement. KHI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan health policy and research organization based here in Topeka, founded in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation.

The Kansas Health Institute does not take positions on legislation. We want to inform the decision-making process by providing evidence-based findings in order to maximize the potential positive health effects of a policy decision, while mitigating the potential negative health impacts, and therefore we are here to speak neither for nor against SB 155. Senate Bill 155 addresses a variety of issues related to marijuana possession and penalties, and legalizes medical marijuana for a variety of medical conditions.

We would like to provide information on the results of our health impact assessment – or HIA – on the issue of legalization of medical marijuana in Kansas. The HIA was based on the proposals included in SB 9/HB 2011 of the 2015 session. In general, SB 155 includes many similar provisions, but we have not conducted additional research into the specific provisions of this year’s bill. The study assesses how the legalization of medical marijuana could affect access to and consumption of marijuana, property and violent crimes, driving under the influence, traffic accidents, accidental ingestion and associated health outcomes (e.g., injury, mortality, mental health, quality of life). The HIA includes a review of existing literature, data analysis for Kansas and states that have legalized medical marijuana, and interviews with stakeholders around the state.

As of November 2016, 29 states including Washington, D.C. have legalized medical marijuana, and an additional 16 states have passed more restrictive medical marijuana laws. See **Attachment 1** in your materials for a map of the medical marijuana laws in the United States.

I would like to share some of the key findings from our health impact assessment to help inform your discussion on this issue. **Attachment 2** in your materials includes findings and recommendations regarding consumption, crime, driving under the influence, traffic accidents and ingestion/overdose.

One of the primary impacts studied in the report was the impact of legalization of medical marijuana on access to and consumption of marijuana. Our research found that the legalization of medical marijuana may result in little to no impact on consumption of marijuana among the general population in Kansas. However, some increase in marijuana consumption for at-risk youth and individuals with approved medical conditions may occur. The level of this change would depend on regulation and law enforcement practices.

Accidental ingestion of marijuana products could increase, especially for young children, according to the research. However, it is important to note that the increase in accidental ingestion of marijuana might be relatively minimal compared to accidental ingestion of opioids, and growing evidence points to decreased opioid abuse and mortality in states that have legalized medical marijuana.

The study also examined the impact of medical marijuana legalization on crime. Based on the reviewed data and literature, states that legalized medical marijuana did not see broad increases in criminal activity, however, areas that are located in close proximity to dispensaries might experience increases in crime. That said, the areas where dispensaries are likely to establish may already have elevated crime rates.

Finally, the legalization of medical marijuana may result in an increase in driving under the influence of marijuana and related traffic accidents.

A few of the key recommendations from the HIA include:

- Requiring dispensaries to provide educational materials on the importance of not sharing marijuana with those who are not authorized to use it;
- Requiring dispensaries to implement safety measures to deter crime, such as video surveillance;
- Requiring medical marijuana products to have labels with detailed usage and warning information;
- Enacting regulations for child-proof packaging in order to prevent accidental ingestion of marijuana products; and
- Limiting the number and type of edibles, and requiring those that are allowed to be less attractive to children and youth.

We invite you to review the provided HIA executive summary and the attachments to this testimony for more detailed information about findings and recommendations of our study.

Thank you for your time, and I will now stand for questions.

If you have any questions regarding today's information or the health impact assessment, please contact Sarah Hartsig at (785) 233-5443 or [shartsig@khi.org](mailto:shartsig@khi.org).

Enclosures: Attachment 1: Map of states that have legalized medical marijuana, 2016.  
Attachment 2: HIA Findings and Recommendations  
Attachment 3: Executive summary of the HIA: Potential Health Effects of Legalizing Medical Marijuana in Kansas

