

WILLIAM H. SORRELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUSANNE R. YOUNG
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

WILLIAM E. GRIFFIN
CHIEF ASST. ATTORNEY
GENERAL



TEL: (802) 828-3171
FAX: (802) 828-2154
TTY: (802) 828-3665
CIVIL RIGHTS: (802) 828-3657

[http:// www.ago.vermont.gov](http://www.ago.vermont.gov)

STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
109 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER
05609-1001

February 18, 2016

Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

As current and former Attorneys General for the state of Vermont, we have each worked closely with law enforcement agencies to enforce the prohibition of marijuana. We have tried our best to make these policies succeed for the people of our wonderful state. However, we can no longer disregard the clear evidence that our policies simply are not serving the public interest, and we believe it is time for the state to move forward with a new, more thoughtful approach to marijuana policy.

The consequences of forcing marijuana into the illicit market have become impossible for us to ignore. Last year, we learned from the Rand Corporation's report that approximately 80,000 Vermonters consume marijuana each month, and that they spend about \$175 million each year buying marijuana from illicit drug dealers. These numbers do not tell the story of a policy that is working for Vermont.

We also know that some drug dealers who are currently selling marijuana in Vermont don't care how old their customers are, and in many cases, may be introducing our friends and neighbors to more dangerous substances such as heroin. In contrast, we know that when Vermonters buy alcohol or tobacco, they are required to show ID, and the regulated market ensures that they are not being exposed to other, more dangerous substances.

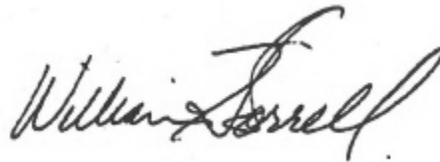
When Vermont decriminalized possession of an ounce or less of marijuana in 2013, it was an important step forward. However, that reform did not address the question of how marijuana should be produced and sold. Until the Legislature authorizes a legal, regulated source for marijuana, consumers will continue buying from the underground market, enriching and empowering the very drug trafficking organizations that our law enforcement officers and prosecutors are working so hard on a daily basis to fight.

For these reasons, we have decided to join Governor Shumlin in calling for a responsible, phased-in approach to marijuana regulation in Vermont. We understand that eliminating civil

penalties for possession by adults and shifting to a regulated system of production and sale must be done in a thoughtful and deliberate way. After reviewing S.241, as amended by the Senate Judiciary Committee, we believe it is the right bill at the right time, and that its passage will result in a dramatic improvement over the status quo.

Instead of subsidizing gangs and cartels with a failed prohibition policy, we believe Vermont should focus on reducing the harms associated with marijuana and other drug use through prevention, education, treatment, and smart enforcement strategies. We strongly believe that these goals can best be achieved through regulation, not prohibition. Accordingly, we call on the Legislature to pass S.241.

Sincerely,



William H. Sorrell
Attorney General



M. Jerome Diamond
Former Attorney General



Kimberly B. Cheney
Former Attorney General