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Call for Ban on Marijuana Promotions and Advertising

Portland, ME—The recent decision to place marijuana promotional advertising on Metro buses is just one example of the need to regulate the marijuana industry.

If we truly all agree that marijuana should not be used by youth, then placing such promotions where youth are likely to view them should be banned. School children ride the Metro buses to school.

We urge the Metro Transit District to review their guidelines with regard to alcohol or tobacco advertising and ask that marijuana promotion follow those same guidelines.

Big Marijuana, just like Big Tobacco or Big Alcohol, will be highly motivated by profit. If we do not ban such promotions, we will see a significant increase marijuana marketing and promotion. If current claims for legalization are an indicator (i.e., that marijuana is safer than alcohol), those marketing efforts will further erode youth's perceptions of risk and harm.

There is a clear correlation between youth's decreased perception of harm and increased marijuana use. After sweeping changes to Maine's medical marijuana policies in 2009, 52% of Portland students in grades 9-12 believed people risk harming themselves if they smoked marijuana regularly (2011 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey), a drop from 60% in 2009.

Maine high school students who think there is little risk from smoking marijuana are 5.3 times as likely to use it. From 2009 and 2011, students in Portland reporting marijuana usage in the past 30 days rose from 24% to 28%; that of those who reported ever having used marijuana rose from 39% to 42%.

Regardless of the many opinions on marijuana, there is one thing most of us can agree on - keeping marijuana away from youth is important.

As we continue to discuss, debate and create policies, let's remember: Kids are listening to what we say. The messages we send influence their decisions.

Visit our website (www.21reasons.org) for more information on youth's perceptions of marijuana promotion and preventing youth substance use, particularly http://www.21reasons.org/21r_marijuana_monitor_tips.pdf.

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