



# Statement of Utah Medical Association

August 23, 2018 - Press Conference - Utah State Office Building Auditorium

I am Dr. Adam Taintor, Vice Speaker of the Utah Medical Association, which represents the majority of Utah physicians, from every specialty across the state. We have been studying the medical marijuana issue for many years and have consistently recognized that there is a place for cannabis-based medications in the toolbox of the profession. But as with all potentially addictive substances, there must be safeguards to ensure safety, efficacy and consistency of the substances used to treat patients. We must first “Do No Harm” and respond compassionately to patients’ needs. That is what we do every day, but we also need to protect patients and protect Utah from harm.

Some have questioned why the association has so adamantly opposed Proposition 2 and its purported goal of putting another tool at the disposal of physicians and their patients. The short answer is that Proposition 2 is not about medicine! It is a poorly disguised initiative to allow recreational use into the state. Taking a vote on a ballot initiative does not make something medicine. And the emotion-laden rhetoric that accompanies any controversial measure tends to ignore any science that doesn’t conform to personal opinion.

Physicians are dedicated to continuing the careful search for the best medicine for each patient. As such, we are not closed off to the possibility of supporting proposals for medical cannabis that are supported by credible science and include appropriate safeguards to public health. But Proposition 2 is not such a proposal.

For instance, under Proposition 2, the only involvement of a physician who recommends marijuana as a treatment for any patient would be to

recommend a “marijuana card,” allowing the patient to visit a marijuana dispensary where a budtender, who isn’t required to have **any** medical training, would recommend various products based on what is in stock or what they may want to sell. These products would include edibles such as cookies and brownies and high THC concentrates such as dabs, wax, shatter and other psychoactive marijuana extractions and even whole plant marijuana. In some instances, individuals would have the ability to grow marijuana plants for themselves and others. The physician has no idea what the patient purchases or what the patient ends up taking. There is no required standard of care or follow-up with that patient. No record of the product is provided to the physician who gave a “marijuana” card. In addition, the records of all such purchases are destroyed after 60 days.

Dispensaries are not like pharmacies. This is not medicine!

Dispensaries, run by big marijuana, will operate like those in states where recreational marijuana has been legalized, where the goal is not patient care, but profit from a substance that will addict 1 in 9 of its customers – doubling that if the users are adolescents.

Qualifying illnesses under Proposition 2 for a marijuana card, opens the door for almost anyone to easily qualify for a card. Even someone perfectly healthy could get one because the list of illnesses is almost unlimited. Most conditions on the list have no science to back up the use of any marijuana product. If a condition is not on the list, it can be added on a case by case basis. A provider, who does not even have to be a physician, can recommend a marijuana card for just about any illness and for any age of individual, including infants, toddlers, children or teens.

If Proposition 2 passes, you can be sure that unethical providers will be attracted to Utah, setting up shop much as they did in Venice Beach,

California, where providers who otherwise couldn't make a decent living, would provide a medical marijuana card to anyone who walked in the door, so long as they paid the consultation fee.

The UMA's primary goal is to maintain the highest level of ethical, scientifically-based quality medical care to the people of Utah, and in preventing the health risks – increased addiction, increased traffic accidents and victims, increased suicides and increased risk of poisoned children – that can result from increased availability of marijuana under the guise of medicine. Again, we need to move forward in a way that will not harm Utahns as Proposition 2 would.

We urge Utah citizens to reject Proposition 2. If we are going to approve medical cannabis, let's do it the right way. Let's **not** open the state to recreational use of marijuana in the guise of medicine.