

Association of Minnesota Counties' Guiding Principles for Cannabis Legislation

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The Association of Minnesota Counties recognizes the significant impact adult use cannabis legalization in Minnesota, if enacted, will have on county operations. After months-long study of the issue and consultation with county partners, the Association of Minnesota Counties requests policymakers to consider these principles in proposed cannabis legalization legislation:

- Grant local governments the authority to opt-in or opt-out of sectors of the cannabis industry based on the preferences of their residents. Local governments must also have the authority to institute a temporary moratorium so they can study the law and gather input from residents before deciding on local cannabis policy.
- Create a strong regulatory framework ensuring only safe and legal operations can succeed.
- Establish a shared revenue source that reimburses local governments for implementation, public education, and ongoing enforcement.
- Support public health education about the impacts of cannabis use to protect the health of families and communities.
- Include county representatives in all official legalization discussions such as workgroups, rulemaking bodies, and advisory boards.

Public Health & Human Services

- *Data collection and monitoring*
The long-term impact of legalizing cannabis on families and communities is largely unknown so it's essential that public health data is collected and analyzed to inform future policy development.
- *Adolescent use prevention*
Studies show cannabis use is harmful for adolescents and youth today view cannabis as less dangerous than alcohol and tobacco. As cannabis availability increases in neighboring states and Canadian provinces, local public health education campaigns are needed to inform adolescents and parents about the health consequences of cannabis.
- *Safe use education*
Nationwide, cannabis vape users have been hospitalized with severe and sometimes fatal respiratory illnesses that public health officials suspect was caused by contaminated products. With the growing variety of cannabis products and evolution of potency, local public health offices can provide the public with accurate information to prevent dangerous use.
- *Product and facility inspections*
Cannabis cultivation facilities need to be inspected to protect the health of industry employees and ensure safe products. Local public health professionals can provide valuable input on inspections and environmental health to protect consumers and cannabis industry employees.
- *Substance use disorder treatment*
Counties provide substance use disorder services such as completing assessments, arranging for or providing treatment, and managing care. Counties also provide resources to support children whose parents cannot care for them due to chemical use. These services may be impacted by the increased availability of cannabis in Minnesota's communities and may require additional state financial support.

Environment, Natural Resources, Planning and Zoning

- *Zoning for public health and safety*
Counties are responsible for zoning regulations for many areas outside of municipalities. New planning and zoning ordinances will need to address not just location, but also odor and lighting control, signage, security systems, and hours of operation for each sector of the cannabis industry: cultivation, manufacturing, testing, and retail.

- *Managing wastewater and solid and hazardous wastes*
Most counties are responsible for local water management plans and solid waste management. Every sector of the cannabis industry generates waste that must be properly disposed to protect public and environmental health. Counties may require the support of state partners to study proper disposal methods and finance new services.

Regulation and Taxation

- *Protecting Taxpayers from Unfunded Mandates*
Cannabis legalization impacts a wide range of county services and programs. Counties will have to cut other programs or seek property tax increases to cover the costs associated with legalization. The state must protect property taxpayers from these prospective costs through a shared revenue program with consistent allocations to local governments.
- *State and Local Partnership*
Some legalization states share licensing and regulation authority with local governments. If local governments do not have licensing and regulation authority, the state must work with local governments to ensure that all cannabis license applications are compliant with local ordinances prior to approval.
- *Impact on Federal, State, and Local Relationships*
State and local programs depend on financial support from federal sources. The state should analyze how legalization of cannabis in the state and localities, while it remains illegal federally, could impact funding for state and local programs.

Public Safety

- *Road safety*
County Sheriffs are responsible for keeping our roads safe. They will need new and ongoing training to identify impaired drivers and financial support to cover the additional costs of THC testing. The state, with county input, should establish a secure chain of custody process so that products are safely transported between industry businesses.
- *Community safety*
The adult use cannabis industry is largely a cash economy. County law enforcement will need to address the increased security risks of large volumes of cash circulating at cannabis businesses in their communities. Cannabis businesses must be required to have adequate security systems to discourage property crimes and prevent product diversion to illegal markets.
- *Environmental safety*
States with legal cannabis operations have continued to investigate and mitigate illegal grow operations. Illegal grows are dangerous for county law enforcement to investigate, additionally, the cleanup and remediation of sites can cost tens of thousands of dollars.
- *Law enforcement support*
Most of Minnesota's drug sniffing dogs will be unable to serve after legalization because they cannot be retrained to not identify cannabis. Local law enforcement departments will need financial support to invest in a new generation of K9 units.
- *Decriminalization and expungement*
The decriminalization of cannabis and expungement of prior convictions will impact county jails, correction programs, probation/parole departments, and County Attorney offices. State departments should ensure an unbiased and equitable expungement process and must consult counties on policy development and timelines. In addition, processing these changes and adjusting to new practices may add significant workloads to county offices. These offices should be supported financially by state resources.