

Recently, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf doubled down on his push for marijuana legalization despite the ongoing COVID-19 shutdown. He predicts commercialized weed will generate tax revenue to fill pandemic holes and be considered a win for social justice.

Simply put, Mr. Wolf is being misled.

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper projected the state would rake in \$118 million in pot taxes the first year of legalization. In reality, it only brought in around [\\$67 million](#)...well short of the promised windfall. Currently, marijuana revenue accounts for only 0.78% of the overall budget.

In California, voters were sold the line that the state could collect upwards of a [billion dollars](#) in revenue. In reality, the state has failed to bring in anywhere close to that mark—it fell 75% short of it, in fact, through the first year. All this prompted outgoing California Governor Jerry Brown to say, “I have not counted on any revenue from marijuana. Who’s counting on the marijuana revenue? People said that to make it more plausible for voters.”

So what’s the issue? It appears the black market is growing stronger. One in five marijuana users in the state [continue](#) to purchase the drug off the street as opposed to buying it from retail stores. The situation is so bad, [foreign cartels](#) and criminal gangs are turning [whole neighborhoods](#) into pot growing operations and even growing the drug on national lands.

What makes Governor Wolf and our lawmakers in Harrisburg think the Pennsylvania experiment will be any different? Not only will legalization fail to wash our state in cash, it will likely cost the state far more than it could ever bring in.

A recent study out of Colorado [found](#) that for every dollar of marijuana revenue, \$4.50 must be spent to fix the damages it causes. Lawmakers aren’t accounting for the money that must be spent to implement regulatory operations, police illegal growing operations, treat increased rates of Cannabis Use Disorder, and deal with large increases in impaired driving.

With regard to social justice, a recent NBC report found that the vast promises of social justice espoused from legalization advocates have [fallen short](#). The number of African-American youths arrested increased after legalization in Colorado. Further, African-Americans in Colorado are three times more likely to be arrested on marijuana charges than white people. And less than 2% of the national marijuana industry has any form of minority ownership at all.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic. This new commercial marijuana industry has created a super strength version of weed that is far more harmful than the “ditch weed” of yesteryears. Allowing this new, high potency drug into our state will come with public health consequences our state cannot afford. From the overwhelming majority of [research](#) on the lower potency pot, we know that marijuana use affects memory, learning, can lead to a loss of IQ points, and has even been linked to severe mental illness issues such as schizophrenia, psychosis, and suicidal thoughts. What’s more, [recent research](#) has found that daily use of high potency marijuana is

associated with a five-fold increase in instances of psychosis. The thought of normalizing and promoting this industry that is running so far ahead of science – in the middle of COVID-19 - is baffling.

Mr. Wolf and our lawmakers should reject the promises of Big Marijuana or we will all pay the price. The marijuana industry and its Big Tobacco and Big Alcohol investors don't care about tax revenues, or COVID-19, and we should not allow them into our state.

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