



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 1, 2017

The Honorable Norman Major, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 202
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

**Re: HB 215 (Establishing a Commission to Study the Legalization, Regulation,
and Taxation of Marijuana)**

Dear Representative Major and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

As Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write express our opposition to HB 215, a bill proposing to create a commission to study the legalization, regulation, and taxation of marijuana.

The goals of this bill begin to take New Hampshire down a dangerous path that seeks to raise income through the legalization of a drug that represents a significant part of substance abuse in the United States. While this bill proposes to study the impact of treating marijuana in a manner similar to the way the State “deals with alcohol,” scientific evidence links marijuana to long-term damaging effects on brain development. “When marijuana users begin using as teenagers, the drug may reduce thinking, memory and learning functions and affect how the brain builds connections between the areas necessary for these functions. Marijuana’s effects on these abilities may last a long time or even be permanent.”¹

While some may argue there is no harm in studying the legalization of marijuana, passing this bill would send the message that New Hampshire is interested in pursuing the legalization of marijuana, and this drug has devastating effects we all should be seeking to prevent. For these reasons, we urge you to report HB 215 as inexpedient to legislate. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and for your service to the people of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

Meredith P. Cook, Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy

¹ Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ). *Behavioral Health Trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 Survey on Drug Use and Health*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2015. HHS Publication No. SMA 15-4927, NSDUH Series H-50.