



## CHRISTIAN ACTION LEAGUE OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.

6325 FALLS OF NEUSE ROAD, STE 35-106, RALEIGH, NC 27615

Office phone: (919) 787-0606

Email: [office@christianactionleague.org](mailto:office@christianactionleague.org) • Website: [www.christianactionleague.org](http://www.christianactionleague.org)

September 16, 2020

Representative Ted Budd  
118 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Budd,

The Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc. has been on the frontline addressing alcohol policy in the Old North State for more than seven decades. A primary objective of our work has been to educate lawmakers as to what policies work best to curb alcohol-related harms. Although often marginalized as neo-prohibitionists by the alcohol industry, I am very proud of the way so much of what we've done has worked to positively protect the public's health.

In 2009, the League took an unprecedented step when it joined with other health organizations to take on King Tobacco in North Carolina. As a native North Carolinian, I worked in the tobacco fields as a boy and was quite familiar with the state's affection for its rich and beloved heritage. But it was also overwhelmingly apparent that, like alcohol, tobacco presented a deadly threat. So I convinced the League's Board it was past time to implement some common-sense approaches to minimizing smoking's deleterious health effects by supporting legislation that would give the FDA authority to regulate it. Moreover, we advocated for smoke-free legislation on the state-level, banning smoking in certain public places to protect people from second-hand smoke.

Today many people will live longer, healthier lives because of these public-policy successes. Nevertheless, the battle continues; alcohol kills one-hundred thousand people every year, while tobacco kills another five-hundred thousand annually.

Now looming over our nation is the dark cloud of marijuana legalization and the argument often made for its validation is that both alcohol and tobacco are worse for you, and they are legal. Therefore, pot should be legal. But I suggest that our experience with both alcohol and tobacco should lead us to just the opposite conclusion.

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Often the arguments made for legalization have to do with supposed economic incentives. Even though similar claims have been made for advancing alcohol and tobacco products, neither has ever provided an economic boon as promised. These two legal drugs, conservatively speaking, cost us considerably more than \$200 billion a piece every year. Their societal costs are ten times greater than any of the tax revenue garnered on the federal and state levels combined. Alcohol and tobacco are substantive burdens on our current healthcare system.

My twenty-year experience as a lobbyist for the Christian Action League in the North Carolina General Assembly has demonstrated over and over again that the big corporations behind alcohol and tobacco persistently promote use and push for loosening regulations.

Are we not to think that if marijuana is legalized that an open market would only create a third vice to add to these already severe complications? Legalization will only make it easier to obtain, glamorize it in many quarters, and cement its social acceptance. Like alcohol and tobacco, all the many resulting marijuana-related problems will just become the price of doing big business – business at the expense of the American citizenry.

What about the nation's youth? Don't we have enough problems in keeping them from damaging their brains, their bodies, their futures, and their hopes with alcohol and tobacco? Now we would allow a third devil into their lives for them to have to contend with, something else for parents to have to worry about keeping out of their reach.

What about the way the alcohol and tobacco industries have targeted communities of color? The evidence to this end is irrefutable. Do we think it will be any different with Big Marijuana? Legalization will only exacerbate contributing factors that have led to many of the claims concerning systemic racism.

I agree with Kevin A. Sabet, former Senior Advisor to the Obama administration's drug policy office. Sabet said in his book, *Reefer Sanity*:

“If anything, our experience with alcohol and tobacco over the past few centuries demonstrates that if these drugs are to be ‘models’ for legal marijuana, then we'd better buckle our fiscal and psychological seatbelts because we are in for a long and rough ride.”

I implore you on behalf of the near four-thousand churches with which the Christian Action League networks in North Carolina, **VOTE AGAINST The MORE Act**. The long-term consequences of this legislation will be extremely adverse to the public's health and safety.

The Scriptures say, “*Learn to do good; seek justice; correct oppression...*” (Isaiah 1:17). This legislation is not good. It is not just, and it will oppress the weak among us.

We will be praying for you to do the right thing. **VOTE AGAINST The MORE Act.**

Thank you for your consideration.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Creech', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Mark Creech  
Executive Director  
Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.