Equitable Policymaking Across Tobacco and Cannabis

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ChangeLab Solutions’ work advances health equity

Equity is at the core of what we do & who we are.
What is health equity?

Health equity = “the state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance.”

(source NAS)
Why is this work important?
Acknowledging past harms to create a more just future

Shift the frame to systems thinking and away from the idea that individuals bear the responsibility for poor health caused by decades—or centuries—of systemic harm.
Applying an Equity Lens to Cannabis Policymaking

Who has been harmed?

Who stands to benefit and how?

How can future harm be prevented?
Proposition 64 Does A Lot...

- Legalizes Recreational Cannabis Use, Cultivation, and Distribution
- Packaging, Labeling, Advertising, and Marketing Standards and Restrictions
- Restricts Cannabis Use in Specified Locations
- Provides Expansive Local Regulatory Authority
- Requires State and Local Approval for All Cannabis Businesses
But Where’s the Equity?
Local Communities Should Lead the Way
California Cities: Cannabis Social Equity Programs

- Removing barriers to entry for those with prior cannabis convictions
- Community reinvestment
- Priority to residents in disproportionately impacted areas (cannabis arrest rates, evictions, foreclosures)
- Priority to low-income applicants
- Fee waivers for equity applicants
- Rent-free space
- Free technical assistance
And some statewide efforts...

Adult Use
- California
- Massachusetts

Medicinal Cannabis
- Florida
- Maryland
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
Improving Outcomes through Health Promotion

Avoiding Unintended Consequences
Clustering in Low-Income Communities

Denver, CO
Restrictions on Cannabis Use*

- Consumption prohibited in all public places
- Smoking prohibited wherever tobacco smoking is prohibited by state or local law

* not an exhaustive list
Addressing Health Inequities Requires Equitable Enforcement

Strong Public Health Policies Can Help Address Health Inequities

- Smokefree Housing: Communities of color & low-income communities are significantly more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

But Enforcement Must Be Equitable

- Racially inequitable enforcement persisted in Colorado, Washington, Alaska, DC
- Housing security
- Immigration status
- Inability to pay fines
Making Strides

Figure 5.3. Lung and bronchus cancer mortality in California and the rest of the United States, 1988–2013.

Note: Rates are per 100,000 and age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. Standard Population (19 age groups - Census P02S-130) standard.
Source: California Cancer Registry.

Figure 1.1. Adult cigarette smoking prevalence within California and the rest of the United States (US-CA), 1998–2014.

Note: Respondents aged 18+ were asked to report current cigarette smoking behavior. An adjustment was made to address the change of smoking definition in 1996 that included more occasional smokers. The weighting methodology changed in 2012 for California but changed for the rest of the United States in 2011. Weighted to the 2000 California population from 1988–2011 and to the 2010 California population since 2012. The U.S. estimate does not include California adults.
Chart 2: Annual Marijuana Arrests or Convictions by State

- Nov. 2012 – Voters in CO & WA approve marijuana legalization
- Nov. 2014 – Voters in AK, OR & DC approve marijuana legalization
- Nov. 2016 – Voters in CA, MA, ME & NV approve marijuana legalization

- Alaska – Marijuana Arrests
- D.C. – Marijuana Arrests
- Washington – Marijuana Possessions
- Oregon – Marijuana Arrests
- Colorado – Marijuana Arrests


Number of arrests or convictions: 13,000, 12,000, 11,000, 10,000, 9,000, 8,000, 7,000, 6,000, 5,000, 4,000, 3,000, 2,000, 1,000, 0
Closing Gaps
Policy can be messy
Community-directed policy

Must correct injustices
Collaborative communication
Listening and learning
Issues in Equitable Funding & Financing

A lack of infrastructure and services

A lack of funding and resources to make changes

Siloed funding streams
Strategies to Equitably Direct Resources

Redirect resources to historically undeserved communities, and toward policies that address their needs. Invest and divest. Use existing funding streams more flexibly.
• Addressing root causes
• Minimum price
• Density
• Location near schools
Applying Equitable Tobacco Control Strategies to Cannabis Regulation

1. Strong, Self-Sustaining Local Licensing Programs
2. Location and Density Restrictions
3. Restrict or Prohibit Certain Products (e.g. Flavors)
4. Pricing Strategies
5. Marketing Restrictions
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Changelab Solutions is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that educates and informs the public through objective, non-partisan analysis, study, and/or research. The primary purpose of this discussion is to address legal and/or policy options to improve public health. There is no intent to reflect a view on specific legislation.
Questions?

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