

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce: Recreational Marijuana decriminalization would negatively impact worker safety

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State Chamber Urges Gov. Evers to Rethink Path to Legalization

MADISON – Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the state’s largest business association – urged Gov. Tony Evers on Monday to rethink his plan to decriminalize marijuana for recreational use. Not only does Evers’ plan put Wisconsin at odds with federal law, the state’s business leaders are concerned about the impacts marijuana decriminalization will have on workplace safety.

Employees who test positive for marijuana use had 55 percent more industrial accidents, 85 percent more injuries and 75 percent greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Additionally, from 2010 to 2013, car crashes involving marijuana went up 300 percent and, as more states legalize the drug, those rates continue to increase.

“There is not enough research on this issue to determine if marijuana can be used safely, and there is plenty of research that shows it impairs an individual’s ability to operate equipment safely,” said Kurt Bauer, WMC president & CEO. “Wisconsin businesses leaders care about their employees’ safety, and decriminalization of marijuana could substantially increase the risk of harm for those employed in the manufacturing, construction, agriculture and other business sectors.”

According to the latest semi-annual Economic Survey of WMC members, 66 percent oppose legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

“The safety of our workers in this state should be of utmost concern for the governor and legislators, and decriminalizing marijuana will make it harder for employers to keep their workplaces safe,” added Bauer.