
The Legalization of Marijuana would do More Good than Harm

“Why is marijuana against the law? It grows naturally upon our planet. Doesn’t the idea of making nature against the law seem to you a bit ... unnatural?” – Bill Hicks. Marijuana, according to the Cambridge Dictionary “is a drug, illegal in many countries, that is made from the dried leaves and flowers of the hemp plant”. Many people mistakenly use the terms decriminalization and legalization interchangeably however there are important distinctions between them. Decriminalization is a loosening of criminal penalties imposed for personal marijuana use even though the manufacturing and sale of the substance remain illegal. Legalization, on the other hand, is the lifting or abolishment of laws banning the possession and personal use of marijuana. The terms “weed” and “blunt” are two of the most stereotypical terms associated with marijuana worldwide. When thinking of these terms, they are commonly associated with negativity. What most people fail to realize is the benefits that can arise by legalizing marijuana because their minds are clouded by the stereotypes associated with the average ‘pot smoker’.

Over the years, marijuana has been considered as a destructible herb that jeopardizes the lives of many and is perceived to be nothing more than an additional issue to be resolved in today’s society. However, based on the breakthroughs in the medical field that marijuana can generate and the economic values associated with marijuana, the legalization of marijuana will in fact, result in more good than harm. The legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm because it has been proven to have medical benefits that can generate a breakthrough in the Health Care System and it has also been proven to have the potential to create economic growth through a thriving industry that can create jobs. The legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm because it has been proven to have medical benefits that can generate a breakthrough in the Health Care System. Do you suffer from pain, migraines, eating disorders or other sicknesses?

If so, you may want to consider marijuana as a treatment. Because the marijuana plant contains chemicals, that may help treat a range of illnesses and symptoms, many people argue that it should be legal for medical purposes. In fact, a growing number of states have legalized marijuana for medical use. When people hear the word marijuana, they think of drugs, addicts, and ruined lives. However, marijuana has its buried good side. According to Railton (2018), “A large review from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine assessed more than 10,000 scientific studies on the medical benefits and adverse effects of marijuana and found that marijuana, or products containing cannabinoids — which are the active ingredients in marijuana, or other compounds that act on the same receptors in the brain as

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marijuana — are effective at relieving chronic pain”. I cannot imagine how dreadful it must be to experience persistent, perpetual, permanent pain, but marijuana can help to relieve the discomfort. “In June 2018, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of a medication containing cannabidiol (CBD) to treat two rare, severe, and specific types of epilepsy — called Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome — that are difficult to control with other types of medication”. Another positive effect that might come out of the legalization of marijuana is the decrease of opiate consumption and prescriptions.

The problem with opioid painkillers is that they can cause addiction, and although they are extremely effective in alleviating pain, there have been cases of death due to overdose. The usage of marijuana as a painkiller could fix this situation — at least partially; according to an APHA study. “A study published in the American Public Health Association just this past week found that since Colorado has legalized recreational cannabis, the percentage of opioid-related deaths has declined by 6.5% which halted a 14-year trend of an increasing number of opioid-related deaths in the state”. Similarly, although not legalized in Jamaica, the legalization of marijuana will also eventually do more good than harm; one can imagine the wonders that this drug can possibly do once legalized. Therefore based on the evidence presented above, one can perceive that the legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm as it relates to Health Care. The legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm because it has been proven to have the potential to create economic growth through a thriving industry that can create jobs. There are many economic benefits to the legalization of marijuana. The economic benefits that producers and consumers would receive are numerous, the jobs creation that could be generated and the tax revenue that could be collected would make the government a main benefactor. According to Cox (2019), “The marijuana industry added 64,389 jobs in 2018, a 44 percent gain, according to industry experts Leafly and Whitney Economics”.

Not only does the legalization of marijuana aid in job creation, it also contributes vastly in the tourism industry which inevitably will eventually create economic growth. “In 2015, 85% of the 8% who visited a dispensary cited legal marijuana as the driving force behind their vacation which implies that at least some of the improved economic impact being witnessed in Colorado is the result of legal marijuana”. In addition, the tax revenue that can be generated from marijuana if or when it becomes legalized can be utilized to fund humanitarian projects for those that are poverty stricken or underprivileged. For example, “In Washington state, marijuana sales surpassed \$1 billion in FY 2017, the state collected \$314.8 million in excise tax revenue and the revenue was primarily used to fund Medicaid which secured health insurance for many low-income Washington residents”. Similarly, although not legalized in Jamaica, the legalization of marijuana will also eventually do more good than harm as Jamaica’s location, makes a marijuana industry a lucrative choice for the Government of Jamaica to gain economic growth. One can imagine the wonders that this drug can possibly do once legalized.

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Therefore based on the evidence presented above, one can perceive that the legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm as it relates to economic growth. Viewed from a different perspective, there are some individuals who believe |argue that the legalization of marijuana will be more harm than good as it is addictive and its legalization will increase the usage among people as it will be readily available. These claims are respectively supported by Stimson (2012) who states that “Marijuana is an addictive, gateway drug” and Barbradozier (2014) who states that “there is a high chance that the legalization of marijuana is likely to increase its usage among people as it will be readily available”. While these claims may be true, the opposing view that the legalizing of marijuana will result in more harm than good because it is addictive and its legalization will increase the usage among people as it will be readily available is simplistic and impractical for many reasons.

Marijuana opponents claim marijuana should be illegal because it is a perceived gateway drug to other narcotics and its usage will increase as a result of the drug being more readily available. While this is an enthralling argument, it is no reason for marijuana to be illegal. First of all, is marijuana even a gate way drug? A ‘gateway’ drug according to the Cambridge English Dictionary is defined as “a drug whose use may make it more likely that someone uses other, more dangerous”. Based on research, “there is no conclusive evidence that the drug effects of marijuana are causally linked to the subsequent abuse of other illicit drugs”. A more logical approach to conclude whether marijuana is a gateway drug is to study the evolution of a marijuana consumer's drug use. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “the majority of people who use marijuana do not go on to use other, ‘harder’ substances”. While it may be true that the legalization of marijuana will allow for it to be more readily available it will result in more good than harm because it would help to minimize the amount of children who purchase drugs illegally from ‘street drug dealers’.

For example, according to the article ‘Does marijuana legalization lead to increased use?’, “When it comes to use by young people, several recent reports according to experts have found that in the majority of states that have approved medical marijuana, use among teenagers has actually decreased which is due to a diminished “forbidden fruit” effect and decreased access to marijuana as it moves from the unregulated streets – where there are no age requirements – to inside licensed dispensaries, where you need to be 21 to purchase marijuana. Therefore one can now determine that the opposing view that the legalizing of marijuana will result in more harm than good is simplistic and impractical for the reasons stated. In conclusion, it is indisputably vivid that there are various arguments for whether or not the legalization of marijuana will result in more good than harm however the arguments supporting the claim that the legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm clearly outweigh the counter arguments. As stated earlier the legalization of marijuana will eventually result in more good than harm because it has been proven to have medical benefits that can generate a breakthrough in the Health Care System and has also been proven to have the potential to

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create economic growth through a thriving industry that can create jobs. These factors could make us stronger as a nation together. In close, I will leave you with this quote from Pops O'Donnell, "A friend with weed is a friend indeed".

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