



## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:** August 22, 2022

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### **Landmark California Cannabis Right to Know Bill Torpedoed by Industry Power** *"Cannabis Right to Know Act" Sought to Inform Consumers and Protect Public Health*

(CA) Today, sponsors of a landmark California bill (SB 1097 - Pan) to provide the most comprehensive and effective health warnings on cannabis products in the nation were forced to withdraw support just days before an Assembly Floor vote -which would have been a final hurdle before reaching Governor Newsom's desk. SB 1097 (Pan) - The Cannabis Right to Know Act - would have provided consumers with warnings about key, well-recognized health risks associated with cannabis, exacerbated by the market shift to turbocharged, ultra-high THC products.

High-potency cannabis products and frequent use of cannabis [have been linked](#) to increased risk of psychosis, dependence, [suicide risk](#) and anxiety, can disrupt memory and concentration, and may lead to severe recurrent vomiting (cannabis hyperemesis syndrome). Cannabis use in pregnancy can cause low birth weight and other long term developmental harms for the exposed infant. Cannabis use is also associated with increased motor vehicle crashes. Just today, the National Monitoring the Future Study [released its 2021 data](#) showing that use by young adults again hit an all-time high, and that harmful daily or near daily use has nearly doubled in young adults and doubled in older adults since 2011.

In the original bill, these risks would have been prominently displayed using rotating graphic health warning labels on product packaging - an approach implemented successfully in Canada since it legalized cannabis, and on advertising. Unfortunately, aggressive cannabis industry lobbying had already resulted in a significantly watered down, though still valuable version of the bill, that required brochures be made available to consumers and mental health warnings prominently added to product packaging. But industry friendly demands to further dilute the legislation just days before a final Floor vote would have resulted in it bearing little resemblance to its original form, leaving supporters no choice but to pull the bill from consideration.

"Today, even as cannabis use by youth once again hit an all-time high, the cannabis industry's growing influence over legislation succeeded in preventing the public from accessing basic information about the health hazards of cannabis use and simple steps to use it more safely," said **Dr. Lynn Silver, pediatrician and Director of Getting it Right from the Start, at the Public Health Institute**. "Despite unquestionable public support and overwhelming scientific consensus for the bill, industry profits won out over youth's and the public's health."

Buoyed by an energized movement across the state and the leadership of the bill's author and practicing pediatrician, Senator Richard Pan, SB 1097 had passed the State Senate in May and won approval of successive Assembly Committees.

"Turbocharged high THC products like dabs and vapes are increasingly used by young people with no guidance about their serious risks to mental health, the developing brain and other adverse effects," said **Jim Keddy, Executive Director, Youth Forward**. "There is an urgent need for more clear, prominent, accurate and comprehensive health information for our young people to understand these risks - particularly to their brains. Sadly, the cannabis industry made sure that's not going to happen – this year."

[Recent research](#) by multiple authors indicates that cannabis health information labels are a proven, effective, and well-accepted approach to educating the public at little or no added cost to government or consumers. SB 1097 was a necessary response to a perfect storm of factors that created an urgent need for the legislation, including:

- Profoundly inadequate current health warnings, [with labels typically hidden, disguised, or in extremely small font](#), and no mention of the risk of mental health problems associated with heavy marijuana use;
- Tripling of [daily or near daily use](#) by adults across the state;
- [Decreasing public awareness](#) of cannabis's associated health risks;
- [Near doubling of use](#) by pregnant women in California from 4.5% to 8%.
- [A 53% increase in California emergency department visits](#) for cannabis-related primary diagnoses (149,000 Californians visited EDs with a cannabis related diagnosis in 2019);
- The proliferation of higher and higher potency cannabis products, often flavored, or mimicking candy or other products typically marketed to kids.

"My emergency physician colleagues and I see first hand the growing tide of people ending up in our departments from psychosis, accidental ingestions, car accidents, suicide attempts, and severe vomiting associated with using cannabis," said **Dr. Lori Winston, Emergency Physician and President, California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians**. "As a physician, I'm deeply disappointed that the actions of the cannabis industry mean that Californians won't be provided this bare minimum of accurate and clear information they deserve about health risks and the simple precautions they can take to use more safely."

SB 1097 is supported by [a broad statewide](#) coalition that includes the Public Health Institute, Youth Forward, California branches of the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles and Santa Clara counties, county behavioral health directors and health officer associations and over 50 other organizations of youth, parents, health and substance use prevention.

"The legal cannabis industry can thrive without sacrificing the rights of California consumers at the altar of corporate profit," **noted Dr. Silver**. "The movement we've created – and its mission to strike a proper balance between public health and cannabis industry profits – is backed by medical fact and scientific reality. We are on the right side of history, and we will be successful in future legislative efforts."