

# MARIJUANA (THC) LEGALIZATION

## *A DISCUSSION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES*

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- An important note
  - The information I am presenting is from my own reading of the literature I have accessed and the opinions and conclusions expressed are my own
  - Neither the Tompkins County Health Department nor the Board of Health have taken a position regarding the legalization of marijuana

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## PUBLIC HEALTH

- What is it ?
- How does THC fit in?

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## SOME BASICS

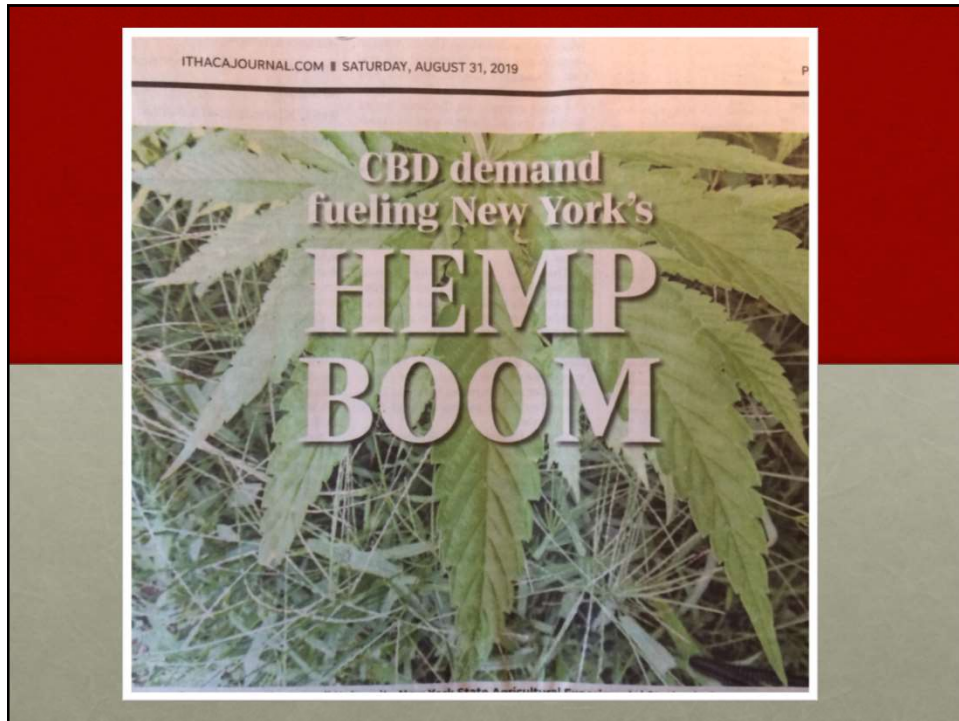
- THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) – the principle psychoactive cannabinoid of marijuana
- CBD (cannabidiol) is the chemical in marijuana that is thought to have medicinal properties
  - *We will touch briefly on CBD*

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## CBD

- NYS law allows the dispensing of “medical marijuana”
  - (actually CBD used for medical purposes)
- Federal law moved CBD out of Schedule 1 of controlled substances

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## CBD ISSUES

- Medical indications
- Routes of use

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## *INDICATIONS*

- Only 3 indications with good data to support them
  - Chronic pain
    - Muscle spasms due to multiple sclerosis
    - Nausea of chemotherapy

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## INDICATIONS WITH LESS SUPPORT

- From Anxiety to schizophrenia

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## ROUTES OF *DOSING*

- Oral
  - Liquid, solid
- NYS prohibits smokable and vappable forms for medical CBD

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*IS 8/30/19*

**Vaping cited  
as cause in  
14 new cases  
of lung illness**

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## SMOKING ANYTHING

- Is Linked to
  - COPD
  - Cancer
  - Asthma / Bronchospasm
  - Chronic bronchitis

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# VAPING

- Linked to:
  - Airway obstruction
- Deaths
  - currently being epidemiologically investigated

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# THC

- Because THC has been and can be made extremely concentrated it has become a greater concern
- It is not marijuana anymore – not like we have thought of it in the past
- If we can, we should stop talking about marijuana or cannabis and instead speak of THC

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## A FAIT ACCOMPLI

- The pervasiveness of THC in our state significantly alters the discussion we are having
- The question before us is how to intelligently approach a substance that is already widespread in a setting wherein our past treatment of it has had unfortunate outcomes

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- 52% of Americans 18 years or older have tried marijuana at some point
  - 44% of them currently use it
  - (Marist poll 2017)

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- 1 in 10 New Yorkers used marijuana in the last month
  - Estimate from National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2015-2016

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- 80-90% of 18 year olds have consistently reported that marijuana is “very easy” or “fairly easy” to obtain since the 1970s

*NYSDOH, Assessment of the Potential Impact of Regulated Marijuana in New York State, July 2018*

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## THC RISKS

- Impairment of cognition
  - Learning, memory, and attention

Harmful to lungs if smoked and we know vaping has health issues

Use in Pregnancy

lower birth weight

more likely to need intensive care after birth

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## THC RISKS CONTINUED

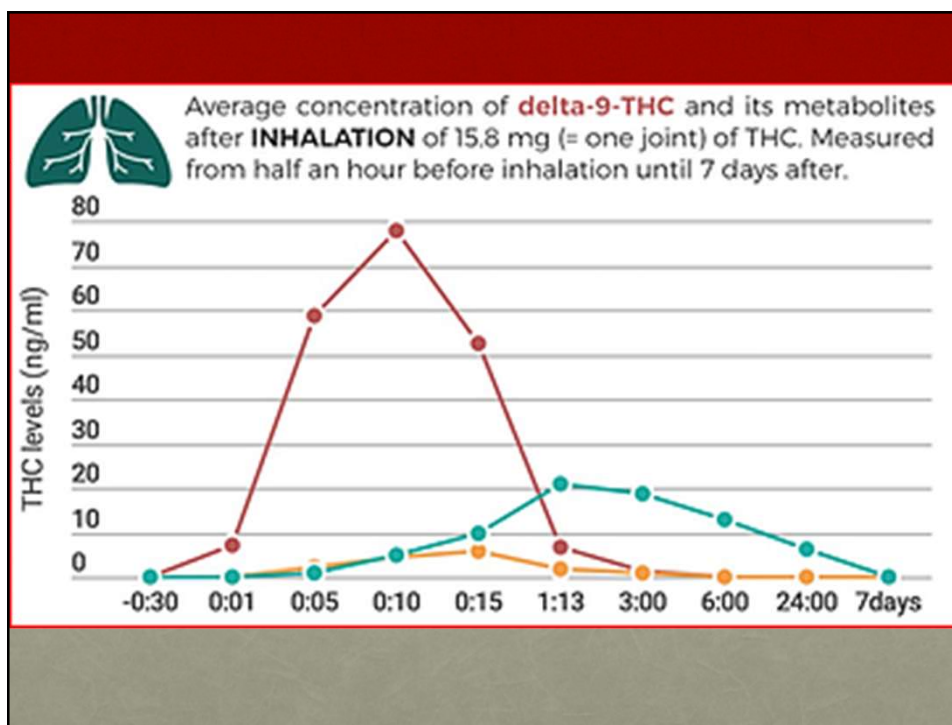
- Psychosis especially in susceptible people
- individuals with serious mental illness use THC at higher rates and if continue use worse outcomes and functioning
- Dependency (lack of consensus – estimates range from 9 to 30%)
- Acute overdose syndromes and deaths

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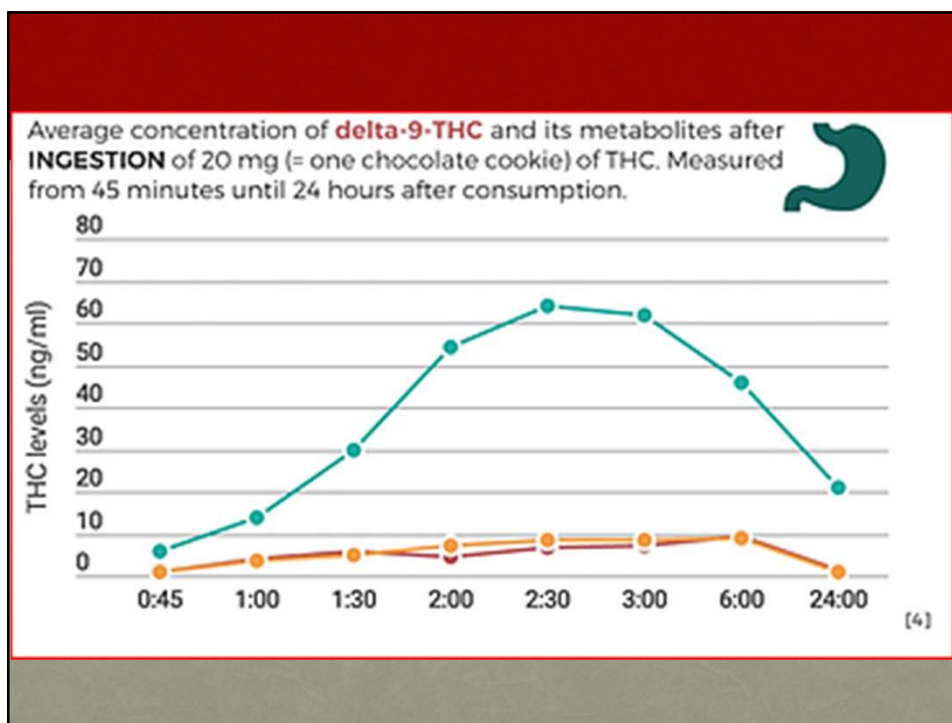
## EDIBLES



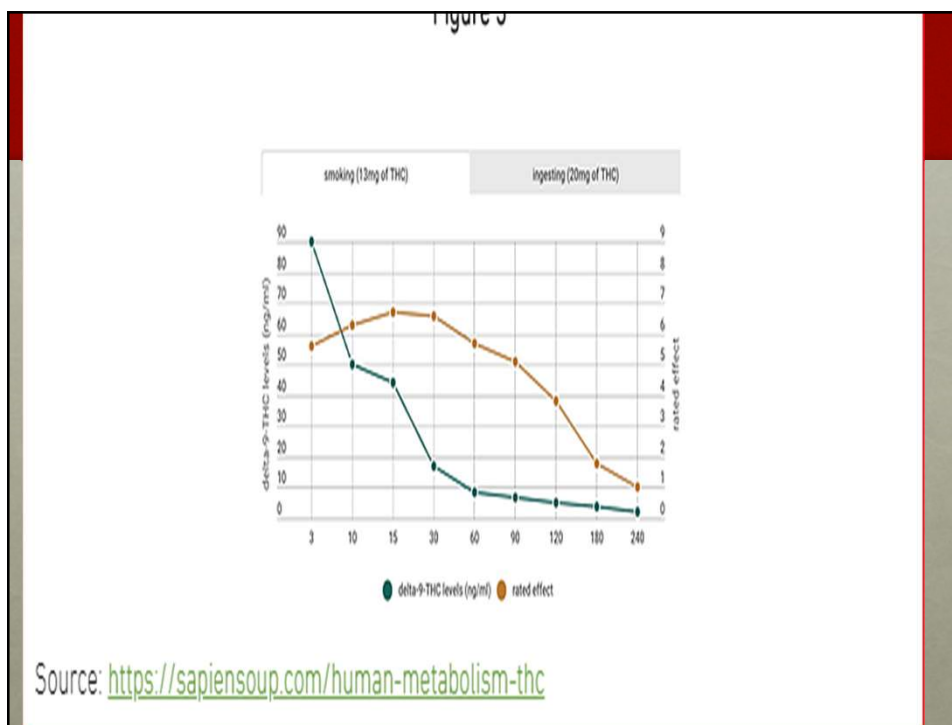
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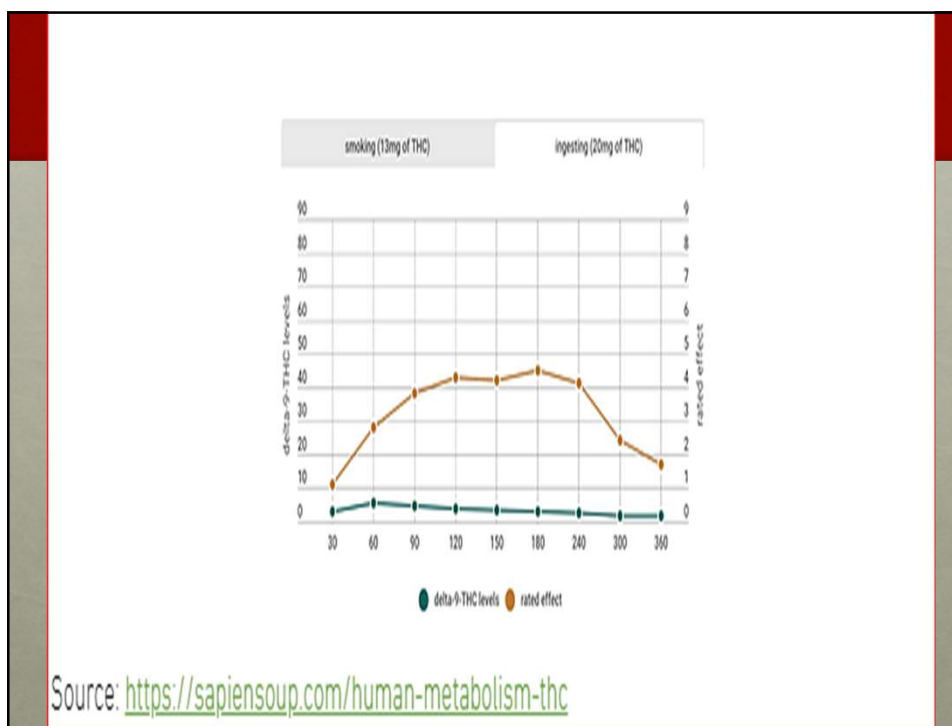


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## THC RISKS – ARREST AND INCARCERATION

- Disproportionate criminalization and incarceration of certain racial and ethnic groups has had a negative impact on persons, families and communities
- And has not curbed marijuana use
- NYSDOH, *Assessment of the Potential Impact of Regulated Marijuana in New York State*, July 2018

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### ▶ HALF OF DRUG BUSTS ARE FOR POT

ACLU

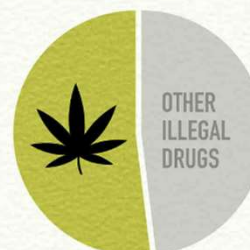
**MOST OF THE PEOPLE POLICE ARE  
ARRESTING AREN'T KINGPINS,**

**BUT RATHER**

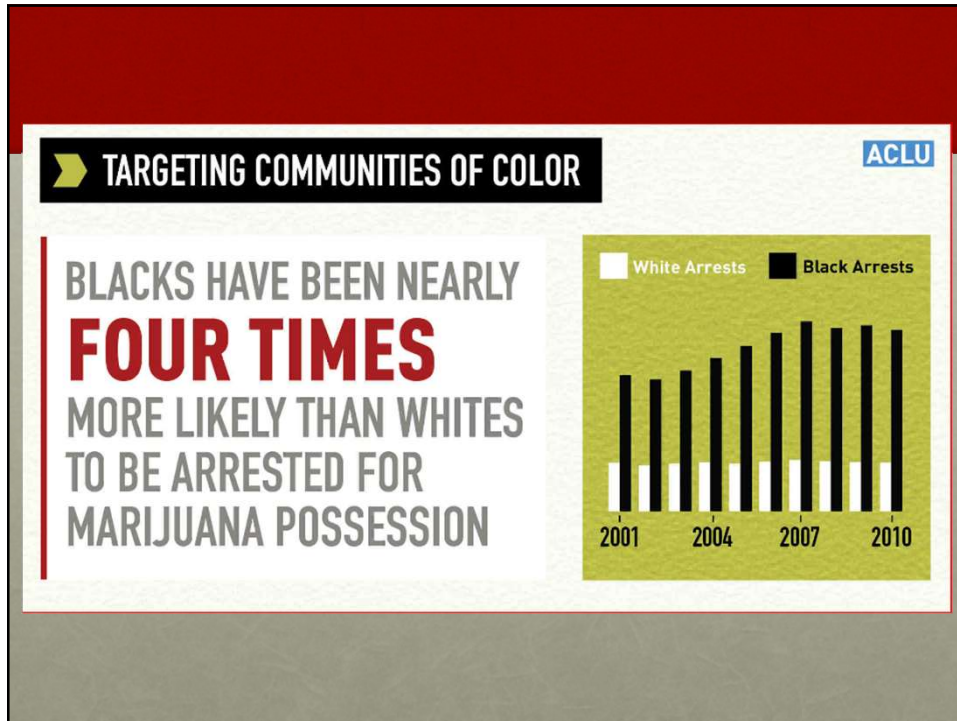
**PEOPLE WITH SMALL  
AMOUNTS OF POT.**



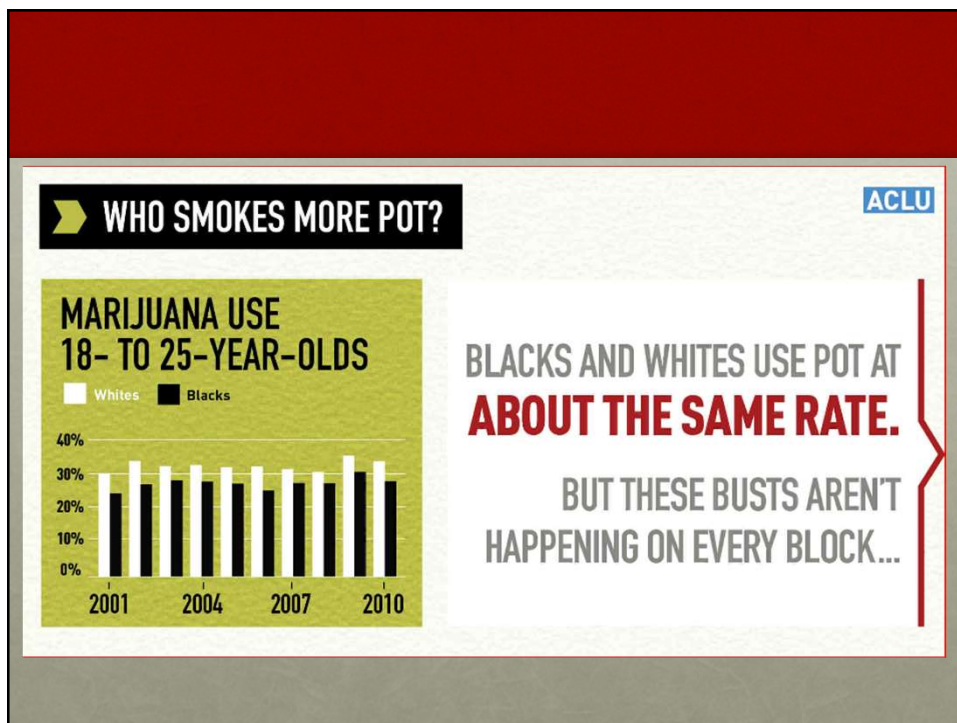
**52%** OF ALL DRUG ARRESTS  
IN 2010 WERE FOR MARIJUANA



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# TRAFFIC SAFETY

- An important concern
  - THC is different from alcohol
    - In detection and determination of impairment
- Studies of traffic accidents and fatalities are particularly tricky to conduct
  - One of the difficulties is the pervasiveness of THC regardless of legalization

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*Early Evidence on Recreational Marijuana Legalization and Traffic Fatalities,*

Hansen et al, University of Oregon Feb 2018

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## OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS

- Losing marijuana as an arrestable offense will remove one of the tools law enforcement has used to provide “cause” to look for other offenses

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## FINALLY - IS THC A GATEWAY DRUG?

“...the majority of people who use marijuana do not go on to use other, “harder” substances. Also, cross-sensitization is not unique to marijuana. Alcohol and nicotine also prime the brain for a heightened response to other drugs and are, like marijuana, also typically used before a person progresses to other, more harmful substances.”

National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Is Marijuana a gateway drug?*  
[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-gateway-drug](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-gateway-drug), accessed 9/25/2018

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## LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION IMPACTS

- **Youth have less easy access**
- Less chance THC product may be adulterated\*
- Marketing more controlled
- Dosing of THC more regulated
- Public education messaging funded
- Social costs such as Arrest/incarceration reduced

\*other drugs, herbicides, insecticides, chemicals

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- **Packaging of product regulated**
- Risks of inhalation/vaping mitigated
- Corporate control of the market subject to regulation

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- Packaging of product unregulated
- **Portion size regulated**
- Risks of inhalation/vaping mitigated
- Corporate control of the market subject to regulation

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- Packaging of product regulated
- **Risks of inhalation/vaping mitigated via education, regulation of product labeling**
- Corporate control of the market subject to regulation

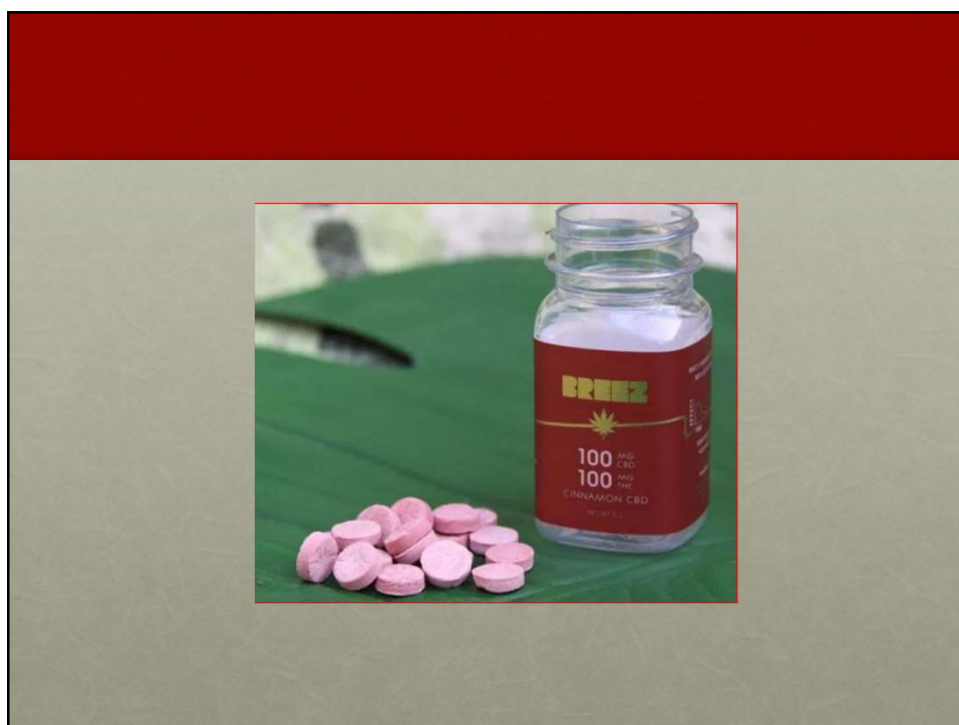
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- Packaging of product regulated
- Risks of inhalation/vaping mitigated
- **Corporate control of the market subject to regulation**

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# LEGALIZATION

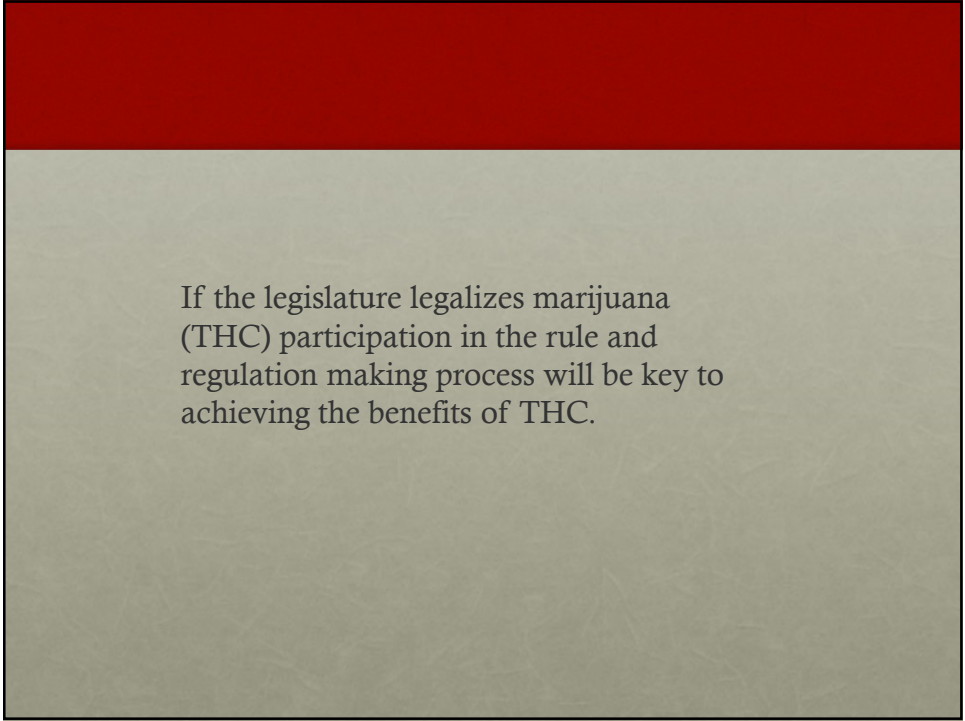
- Folds THC into the same agency and structure we use for alcohol  
Sets the age of purchase at 21
- Amends public health, vehicle and traffic, penal and criminal law amongst others
- Sets regulatory framework for the growing, wholesale and retail sales of THC

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- Sets up a process of citizen input to the all important creations of rules and regulations
  - Public hearings, and written comment
  - Expert testimony
  - Determines the actual operation of the law

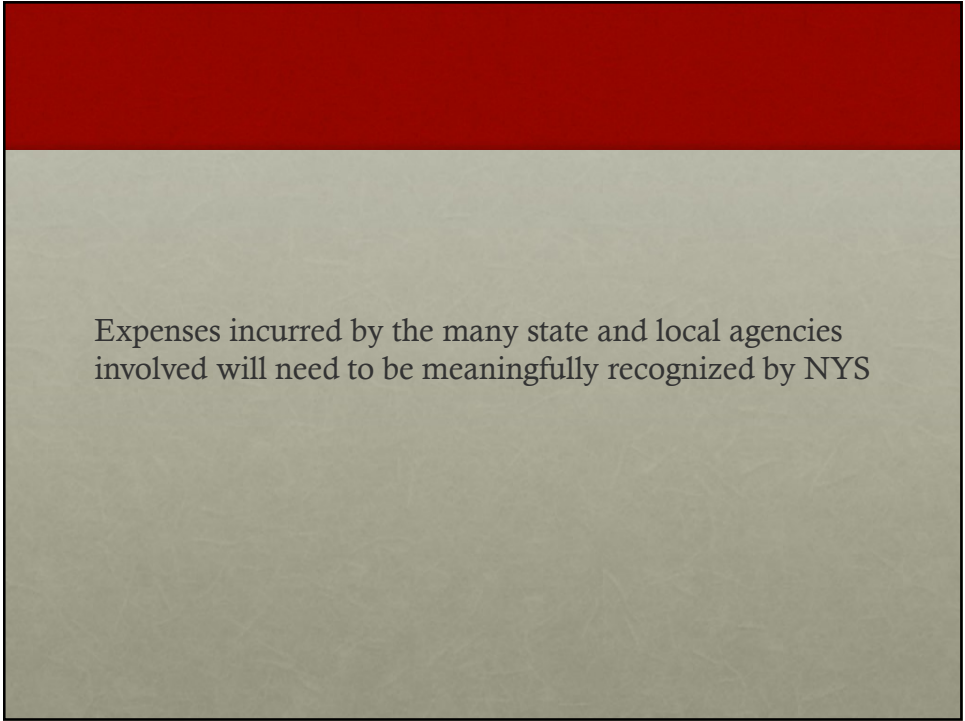
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If the legislature legalizes marijuana (THC) participation in the rule and regulation making process will be key to achieving the benefits of THC.

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Expenses incurred by the many state and local agencies involved will need to be meaningfully recognized by NYS

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