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Despite promises, New Jersey legalization will not benefit minority communities

(Trenton, New Jersey) — This week it was announced that retail sales of marijuana will begin on April 21 in New Jersey. Dr. Kevin Sabet, president and co-founder of [Smart Approaches to Marijuana \(SAM\)](#) and a former senior drug policy advisor to the Obama Administration released the following statement in response:

“Although the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission claims to be focused on social equity, marijuana legalization never results in anything resembling equity. Despite promises from states and advocates, the overwhelming majority of pot shop owners in other “legal” states are still white males. Not only that, but Black men are still more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white men. Marijuana commercialization does not encourage community investment or financially benefit the communities it claims to help.

“The marijuana industry says all the right things but is only focused on profiting from addiction. This is why they make and encourage the use of dangerous, high-potency products. Meanwhile, New Jersey parents, law enforcement, and community leaders are left with fewer resources to clean up the mess of massive marijuana commercialization.

“As we have seen in Colorado, which recently walked back massive marijuana commercialization by tightening potency rules, full blown legalization does not make a state safer or healthier and it is not the cash cow that big marijuana promises. We call on the state to adopt a rapid, robust data mechanism to track these developments and to implement a statewide youth-focused prevention campaign.

“This issue in New Jersey is far from settled. As commercialization moves forward, SAM will continue to work with our New Jersey coalition to educate parents and kids on the harms of marijuana use, expose the industry’s deceitful practices, promote healthy communities, and hold lawmakers accountable for harms this industry will bring upon New Jersey.”

About SAM

[Smart Approaches to Marijuana](#) (SAM) is a nonpartisan, non-profit alliance of physicians, policy makers, prevention workers, treatment and recovery professionals, scientists, and other concerned citizens opposed to marijuana legalization who want health and scientific evidence to guide marijuana policies. SAM has affiliates around the world and in virtually every US state.

For more information about marijuana use and its effects, visit www.learnaboutsam.org.

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