

## Public Health and Prevention + LCB Discussion on high THC: Part two on 6/11/2024

*19 attendees from LCB and external partner agencies and associations were present.*

### Opening remarks

Kristen provided a quick level-setting to walk through the purpose and deliverables for the discussions and summarized the discussions that have taken place to date, including part one discussion group on June 3, 2024 (reference those notes for further information).

### Discussion

The discussion was structured into three rounds, and content was prioritized based on the volume and level of input from partners on each topic during previous discussions. Kristen then posed the following questions for the group to discuss during each round:

1. *What data, evidence, or expertise do you have to support the potential for this strategy?*
2. *What would make this strategy most effective?*
3. *What concerns do you have with this strategy?*

#### *Round one:*

- Public education
- Budtender education
- Packaging and/or labeling changes

#### *Round two:*

- Increased research
- Tiered tax structure
- Age-gating of high-THC
- Advertising restrictions

#### *Round three:*

- THC % cap
- Structural changes in retail stores
- Develop new licensing structure

Participants discussed round one in depth and spent roughly 10 minutes on round two. The discussion will pick back up from that point during the next meeting on June 17. Notes from June 11 are summarized below.

Round one:

	<b>What data, evidence, or expertise do you have to support the potential for this strategy?</b>	<b>What would make this strategy most effective?</b>	<b>What concerns do you have with this strategy?</b>
<b>Public education</b>	<p>This is well established as a proven best practice when done the right way for the right purpose.</p>	<p>Consider ways to integrate understanding signs of problem use, and promote ways to seek treatment or support with substance use disorder.</p> <p>Seek to address cultural norms around excess use, high THC product preferences, and mitigate risk of stigmatizing people who use these products.</p>	<p>When done wrong and not with best practices, can cause harm.</p> <p>So expensive. Difficult to reach audiences with so many channels these days.</p> <p>Whatever policy idea we choose will need some public education, but it cannot be the only thing.</p> <p>Existing resources for consumer education are not currently up to date.</p>
<b>Budtender education</b>	<p>No comments made regarding evidence base for this approach.</p> <p>The MAST card system within Alcohol Licensees is a proven strategy for influencing the cultural norms around responsible vendors.</p>	<p>Involve industry in creation of messaging.</p> <p>Look to the existing MAST program for inspiration.</p>	<p>Large pushback from industry about making this required.</p> <p>Challenge exists with the high turnover rate of budtenders.</p> <p>Concerned with E&amp;E's capacity to monitor whether this was being implemented (if required). Can enforcement be increased to help w compliance/budtender info?</p> <p>Education at point of sale differs from education at point of consumption, where people are actually intoxicated and interventions would be more effective.</p> <p>Budtenders have voiced concern about shouldering the burden of responsible</p>

			vendors, like with alcohol. (driving, pregnant population, etc.)
<b>Packaging and/or labeling changes</b>	<p>Multiple people stated they see this as a smart strategy with promise.</p> <p>Probably has the best data coming out of Canada and other places. Plain packaging, more reasonable font sizes.</p> <p>Some people were not as sure about the efficacy/research and the implementation feasibility.</p>	<p>This is an environment strategy to an extent and is more likely to see impact.</p> <p>Look to Canada as an example.</p> <p>Could be a great way to get this to the consumer directly.</p> <p>Currently: cannabis has this required warning on packaging "It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle under the influence of cannabis;"</p> <p>What could a change look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Larger font</li> <li>--Maybe a bag that says what it is and is hard to miss.</li> <li>--place poison center NFK on all products.</li> <li>--add QR code to more information from a campaign.</li> <li>--make child resistant packaging required for all products to minimize likelihood of people consuming as they drive home.</li> <li>--add warning related to potential risk to mental health</li> </ul>	<p>Less viable politically.</p> <p>Explore better ways to implement unique identifiers. (LCB and DOH will take this conversation offline as it intersects with other areas.)</p> <p>Some concern about packaging being least effective tool for those who need an intervention the most. Is there evidence that it also supports those who at higher risk for SUD?</p>

Overall notes from this round:

- Consider that these three activities put a lot of onus onto the consumer, which in itself is not a best practice. There was general agreement that while these activities may be effective and worth pursuing, they should not exist in isolation or without supplemental environmental activities implemented too.

- For example:
  - <https://leafmagazines.com/specials/2021-washington-edible-special-yummies-gummies/>
  - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/personal-use/how-read-understand-cannabis-product-label.html>
- Some partners showed interest in a field trip to LCB or a retail location to better understand the current product landscape.

*Round two*

	<b>What data, evidence, or expertise do you have to support the potential for this strategy?</b>	<b>What would make this strategy most effective?</b>	<b>What concerns do you have with this strategy?</b>
<b>Increased research</b>	<p>Research is indirect; clear one direction of harm and risks, this is discredited by opponents.</p> <p>Research is important, it supports policy efforts.</p>	Can speak to community norms and perception of cannabis use, especially high THC.	
<b>Tiered tax structure</b>		Explore how can we offset this impact by offering more resources to this population. Consider health equity.	<p>Concern with negatively impacting those with substance use disorder</p> <p>Some shared curiosity about the tiered tax structure especially with possible federal regulation changes on the horizon</p> <p>Currently, WA has one of (if not the) highest tax on general product: 37% excise plus 10% sales. Raising that even more for high-THC product could create more tax than product value/cost.</p> <p>A total restructuring of the 37% would need to happen.</p>
<b>Age-gating High-THC</b>		Could be a very effective way to shift cultural norms.	How politically feasible is this? Not likely if budget is in deficit.

		<p>Some partner interest in age gating for high concentration products because of the increased amount of fatalities (59% increase in impaired driving since 2019) in which we see younger drivers as the most overrepresented in those fatality numbers.</p>	<p>Lots of barriers</p> <p>There isn't any precedent in the US for 25. Except car rental? The political lift is huge.</p>
<p><b>Advertising restrictions</b></p>	<p>Advertising restrictions was an effective strategy for tobacco.</p>	<p>Did not get to this portion of the discussion on June 11.</p>	