



**Washington State Narcotics Investigators
Association**

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To Whom it may concern:

The Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association (WSNIA) is extremely concerned by the Court's ruling on State v. Blake and the subsequent loss of RCW 50.69.4013. We are even more concerned though, by the legislature's lack of action on this. Senators Mullet and Hobbs have proposed a simple fix in SB 5475 but it was not allowed to proceed to a hearing in Committee. Meanwhile, Senator Dhingra introduced SB 5476 which we believe, if passed, would have disastrous consequences for our state. Legalization of user amounts of drugs will facilitate drug sales without fear of consequence. It will ultimately make our communities less safe and allow distributors to further victimize drug users. Washington State is experiencing an opioid epidemic and the Blake ruling has essentially legalized drugs leading to an impending crisis of massive proportion.

Legalization shows a lack of compassion for drug addicts. Addicts are generally not in a position to get help on their own when they are using. Most say that an arrest for possession was the best thing that ever happened to them because it was the beginning of their path to recovery. Taking away this opportunity for them to turn their lives around and make improvements is nothing short of cruel. As an unintended consequence already being seen, some addicts have been removed from treatment programs related to a conviction for drug possession and are now homeless without any resource to contribute to their recovery.

Legalization further traumatizes crime victims and leads to more people being victimized. The rights of those who end up the victims of drug use by others are being entirely disregarded. Through no fault of their own, those who are in the pathway of another's addiction are more likely to be victims of assault, homicide, identity theft, property crime, domestic violence, and other traumatic events. It is crucial that we do right by everyone involved or who could become a future victim of the drug epidemic and its wake. Allowing the violence and crime that comes along with drug addiction to spread to neighborhoods and hurt more Washingtonians will perpetuate the cycle of trauma and substance abuse. It will also negatively impact public health, damage the Washington State economy and erode public safety.



Legalization removes access and incentive for drug addicts to get help. Throughout this opioid crisis, we have all seen the devastating impact of addiction on individuals, families, and children in our communities. This isn't about the incarceration of addicts. It is about the leverage that is necessary to compel them to consider getting the help they need. Drug courts have been extremely effective as an alternative to incarceration. Those struggling with drug addiction will tell you that turning our back on them and allowing them to continue unfettered is like signing their death warrant. The legal system is the only hope many have to get the help they desperately need to overcome their struggle. Again, as an unintended consequence, some drug courts are closing down altogether.

Legalization endangers children and will lead to more deaths. Legalization indicates to our youth that drugs are not dangerous. A significant number of children never try drugs simply because they are illegal. The normalization of drug use sends a dangerous message and will result in even more addiction and overdose deaths. Overdose deaths are up over 40% in 2020 and this will simply add to this devastating upward trend. Beyond usage by children themselves, when parents are struggling with addiction, it's their children who suffer the most. Legalization will cause children to be forced to remain in unsafe situations that will perpetuate cycles of addiction, abuse and poverty.

This is an emergency. We understand that due to the timing of the Court's decision, circumstances did not allow for legislation to exit chamber of origin prior to cutoff but because this is absolutely critical to the health and safety of our communities, we urge our legislators to see this for the emergency it is and immediately implement policy to rectify this.

The legalization of drug possession negatively impacts ALL Washingtonians and a refusal to act on legislation to fix this consequence of State v. Blake is unacceptable. This is truly a matter of life and death. Washington State Legislators have an obligation to do the right thing and put forth or support policy such as SB 5468 that reflects the values and best interest of Washingtonians.

Sincerely,

WSNIA

Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association. 03/17/2021

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