**Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control**

Hearing on

*“Is the Department of Justice Adequately Protecting the Public from the Impact of State Recreational Marijuana Legalization?”*

April 5, 2016

Questions for the Record from

Senator Dianne Feinstein

**Questions for Kathryn Wells, Medical Director, Denver Health Clinic at the Family Crisis Center**

1. **Helpful Federal Government Action**

While states will ultimately craft, vote on, and enact different marijuana regulatory regimes, unless federal laws are changed, I firmly believe that the federal government should enforce the Controlled Substances Act, including its marijuana priorities, and set standards which states must follow when implementing marijuana regulations.

1. *What more can the federal government do to help address the public health and safety concerns associated with recreational marijuana legalization? Is there specific information to be collected or actions to be taken that would be helpful for health professionals like yourself?*

With the passage in several states of ballot and state legislative initiatives to legalize the production, sale and use of marijuana, there is a pressing need for a formal repository of information related to the public health, safety and other consequences, both of marijuana use and of marijuana legalization, as well as changes in public attitude about marijuana use and policies. This requires a sustained and repeated systematic annual collection, analysis and reporting of these data to the public through an annual report. Future public policy decisions will depend on this information.

Founded by founding NIDA Director Dr. Robert DuPont, the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. has recently released a report entitled, *A Strategy to Assess the Consequences of Marijuana Legalization*. This Strategy urges a Congressional mandate to designate and appropriate the necessary funds for the management and coordination of this work using data and research from new and currently existing federal sources. In addition to a federally mandated reporting system, the Strategy strongly recommends the creation of state-based reporting systems and urges private organizations and foundations to become involved.

An additional thought might be to consider adding mandatory reporting to state health departments and CDC; by medical examiners, coroners, and acute care hospitals; of all deaths and hospitalizations of children under the age of 18 in which marijuana ingestion by the child or the child's caregiver at the time is suspected to have led to the death or hospitalization. (This could be condition for the state to receive CDC funds for its health department)

1. *Are there any requirements either for reporting or regulation that you believe the federal government should require of states that legalize marijuana?*

One suggestion might be to ask the CDC to make an annual report to Congress and the DHHS Secretary on the following in the states that have legalized marijuana (perhaps to compare to other states):

1. Adverse events related to child or caregiver marijuana use
2. Summarize new scientific literature on the reported benefits of marijuana reported in the peer-reviewed medical literature

Additionally, states that legalize marijuana should be required to allocate enough resources for prevention, treatment, drugged driving issues, and data collection. However, I have serious reservations as to any state being able to "pay for" the legalization of marijuana. Today the US spends $10 for every $1 brought in revenue from alcohol and tobacco. Though we don't have a precise cost number for marijuana, several factors lead me to believe that marijuana tax revenue will not pay for the societal damage that will incur after marijuana is highly promoted and commercialized -- as it is in Colorado today.