Congress has also acknowledged that it is the illegality of cannabis that places its consumers at risk of using other illegal drugs. Prohibition, itself, creates the gateway effect, not cannabis.

"These findings suggest that for a large number of serious drug users, marijuana does not play the role of a 'gateway drug'. We conclude that prevention efforts which focus on alcohol and marijuana may be of limited effectiveness for youth who are at risk for serious drug abuse."


"Alcohol is the most commonly used substance, and the majority of polysubstance using respondents consumed alcohol prior to tobacco or marijuana initiation."


"Most people who use marijuana do not go on to use other, "harder" substances."


"Scientists are also conducting preclinical and clinical trials with marijuana and its extracts to treat...substance use disorders; mental disorders."


"alcohol represented the “gateway” drug, leading to the use of tobacco, marijuana, and other illicit substances. Moreover, students who used alcohol exhibited a significantly greater likelihood of using both licit and illicit drugs."

Prohibition is not preventing children from obtaining cannabis; however, “We Card” programs can be implemented to ensure that only adults over 21 can legally purchase cannabis. A store owner interested in staying in business will not sell to children, nor will they offer them any harder substances to try. Left unregulated, it is easier for children to obtain cannabis than alcohol, because it is unlikely that they will be asked for I.D. if they try to make a cannabis purchase. Also, having not been rigorously tested, the unregulated cannabis could be laced with dangerous & addictive substances.

**2008 World Health Organization Report Comparing U.S. v Netherlands**

According to the World Health Organization, in the U.S., where cannabis is criminalized, the teen use rate is nearly triple the teen use rate in the Netherlands, where cannabis has been regulated in a manner similar to alcohol since the 1970s. Further, the U.S. adult rate is over twice as high as the Netherlands’ adult use rate.

**NIDA/Johns Hopkins Study**

“Despite considerable changes in state marijuana policies over the past 15 years, marijuana use among high school students has largely declined.”


A 2014 University of Delaware study, funded by the Delaware Department of Health and Human Services, shows teen use of nicotine is on a steady decline in Delaware. Not one teen had to be arrested or subjected to the criminal justice system for that to occur, and no lives were permanently destroyed with a damaging criminal record. Education, regulation, & robust “We Card” programs are proven to reduced use.


**American Pediatric Society**

“The illegality of marijuana has resulted in the incarceration of hundreds of thousands of adolescents, with overrepresentation of minority youth. A criminal record can have lifelong negative effects on an adolescent who otherwise has had no criminal justice history. These effects can include ineligibility for college loans, housing, financial aid, and certain kinds of jobs.”


Education Not Prohibition