



HB296 Testimony February 8, 2018

Noelle Hardt, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Pacific Region Government Relations Director. I reside in Anchorage, Alaska, District N-28.

My work is to support legislative policy and funding development in 9 Pacific states, notably 5 of which have legalized recreational marijuana. I also consult throughout the country with Boys & Girls Clubs and government officials addressing the policy and funding impact of serving youth in a changing drug culture.

As an Alaskan, mother of two and children's advocate, thank you for addressing this important issue in collaboration with service providers and the Department of Health and Social Services. For four years I have been embedded in the issue of the marijuana policy and funding impact on Boys & Girls Clubs. From our work in the region and throughout the country, there has emerged a prevention funding model from Colorado that is proactive, intentional and most importantly, has had early success. It is this model that motivated the collaboration between Alaska Children's Trust, Boys & Girls Clubs, the Afterschool Alliance and the Department of Health and Social Services, as it appears in the House bill addressing marijuana impact.

Colorado's Tony Grampsas Youth Services Fund was originally established from tobacco settlement dollars then pivoted to target marijuana prevention with legalization in 2014. This fund works collaboratively with the Colorado Department of Human Services and is a clearinghouse for accepting dedicated marijuana tax revenue for youth prevention and distributing the dollars to community-based organizations with broad reach and big impact.

Two years into Colorado's targeted prevention effort (6,235 youth surveyed), a Colorado State University research team concluded:

- For children grades 1 through 5 involved in marijuana prevention programs: More youth reported talking to the parents about marijuana and youth perceptions about the harm of marijuana use increased.
- For tweens and teens in grades 6 through 12 involved in prevention programs: 75% reported that they had never tried marijuana and half believed use in their age group was wrong.
  - More work to be done as most youth also acknowledged marijuana would be easy to obtain, one-third thought regular use posed no risk, and perception of parental acceptance of use increased.
- Two key recommendations to leverage greater influence came from this study
  - Emphasize prevention in middle school youth
  - Enlist peer educators

Both of these recommendations rest squarely in Boys & Girls Clubs service model.

A dedicated effort to youth prevention must be included so that community-based after school programs can counteract the long-term consequences of legalization. The proposed involvement of the Alaska Children's Trust in delivering prevention programs efficiently throughout Alaska is largely based

on the successful prevention work in Colorado and is a thoughtful solution. I appreciate Representative Claman's attention to this detail and encourage the committee to demonstrate a commitment to Alaska's children and teens by supporting a meaningful prevention effort in all tax revenue proceeds and legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Noelle Hardt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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