

# Cannabis Policy in New Hampshire



Principles for Responsible  
Cannabis Policy and  
Regulation and Overview of  
Legislation



# today's presenter

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[kfrey@new-futures.org](mailto:kfrey@new-futures.org)

# who we are

## **Solving problems through policy change.**

New Futures works to improve the health and well-being of all Granite Staters through public policy change and civic empowerment.

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# what we support

Our policy priority areas span all stages of life.

## Early Childhood

Strengthening families, mitigating adverse childhood experiences.

## Children's Behavioral Health

Supporting a comprehensive system of care.

## Health

Ensuring access to quality affordable health care.

## Substance Use Disorder

Addressing stigma and discrimination in care for those struggling with addiction.

## Public Health

Protecting New Hampshire's public health system.

## Alcohol and Other Drugs

Preventing substance use through community education and regulatory strategies.

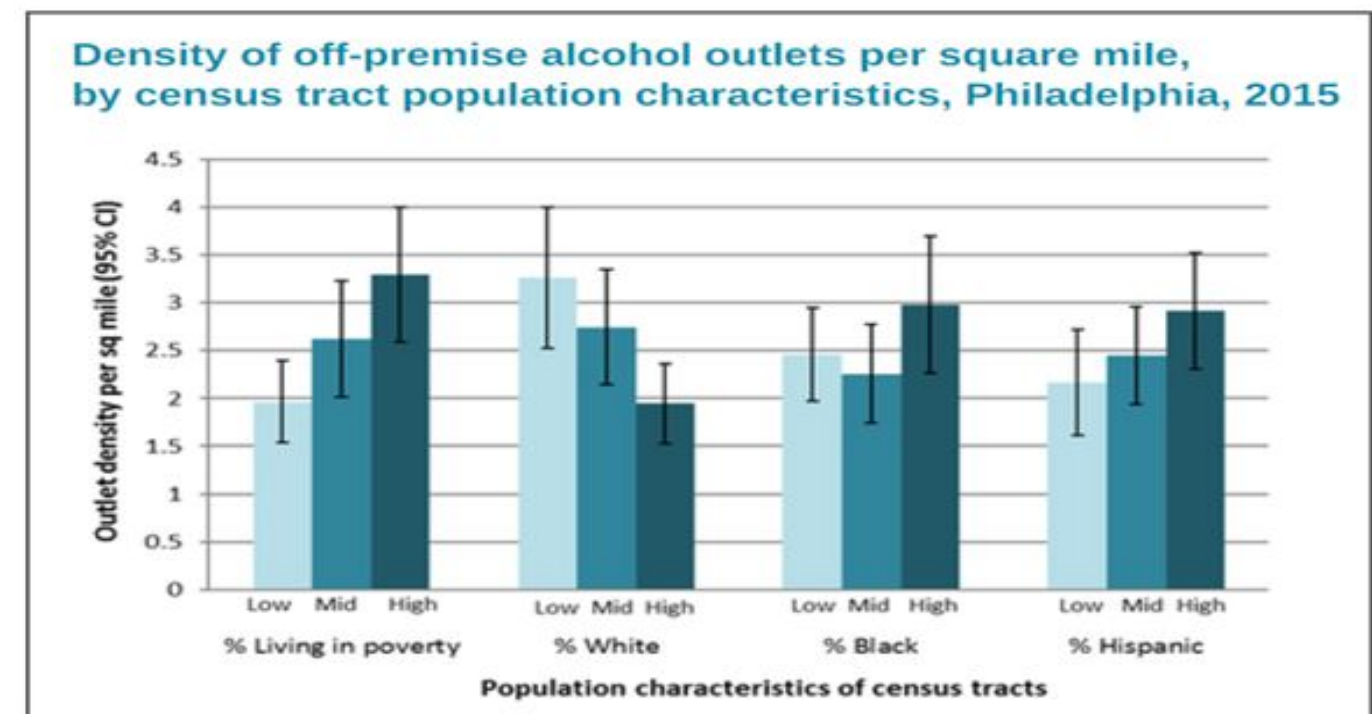
## Healthy Aging

Ensuring older adults have access to services and the ability to choose where and how they age.

The greatest mortality from drugs comes from legal drugs. The moment you make a drug legal, you're going to increase the number of people who get exposed to it, and therefore you increase the negative consequences from its use. **When you legalize, you create an industry whose purpose is to make money selling those drugs. And how do you sell it? Mostly by enticing people to take them and entice them to take high quantities."**



**Dr. Nora Volkow, director at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Boston Globe, May 3, 2018**





our Guide to Making Money in the Multi-Billion-Dollar Marijuana Market

- Home
- Businesses
- Business Guides
- Other Resources

# Budweiser maker teams up with Tilray to explore pot drinks

December 19, 2018



Wall Street's Marijuana Madness: 'It's Like the Internet in 1997'

# BIG MONEY \$\$\$\$



## Cannabis capitalism: who is making money in the marijuana industry?

Marginalized groups that championed legalization struggle to compete with corporate refugees jumping on the bandwagon

- High stakes: cannabis capitalists seek funds to drive drug trade



Forbes

EDITORS' PICK | Mar 3, 2021, 03:43pm EST | 37,151 views

## U.S. Cannabis Sales Hit Record \$17.5 Billion As Americans Consume More Marijuana Than Ever Before

▲ The future looks green - but who ben

Forbes

Billionaires Innovation Leadership Money Consumer Industry Lifestyle Fe

17,874 views | Dec 18, 2018, 08:47am

## Marijuana Marlboro And What Altria's Purchase Of A Canadian Marijuana Maker Means

# RESEARCH REPORT

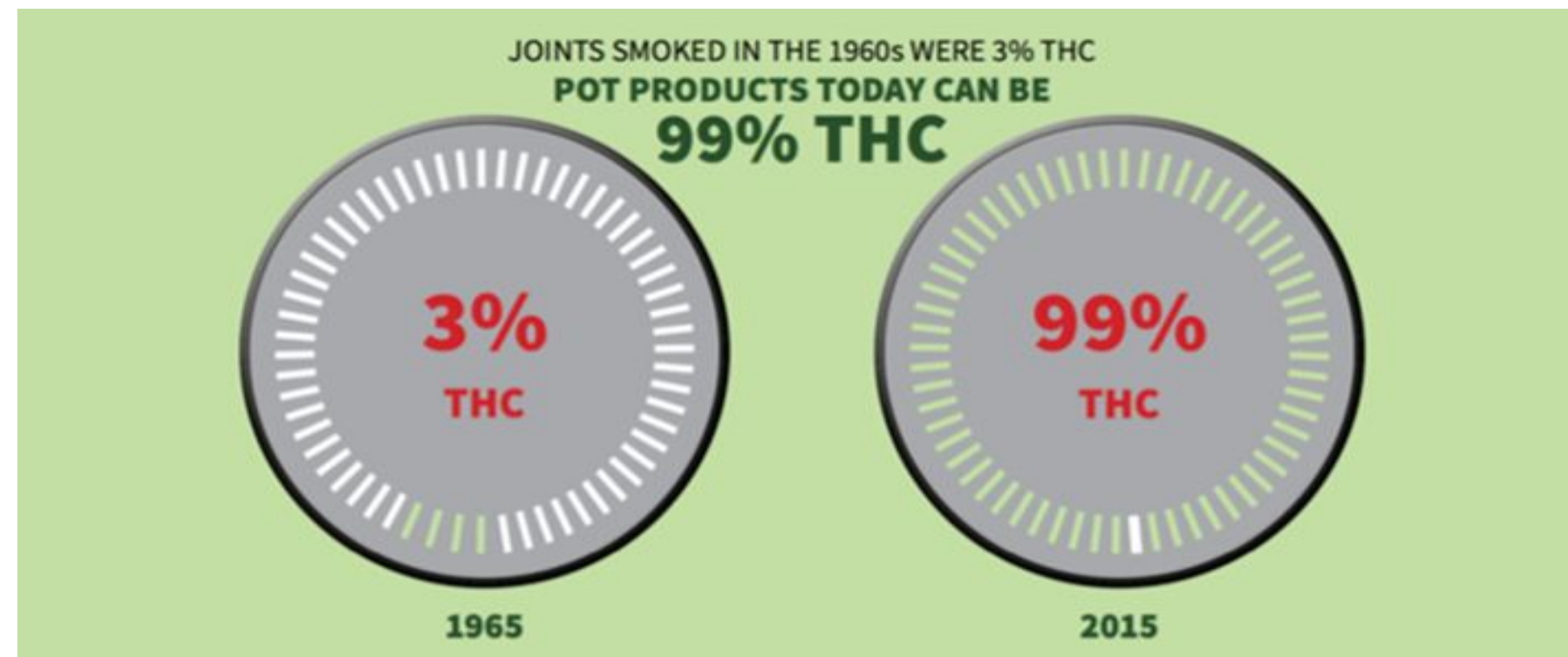
## Frequency of adolescent cannabis smoking and vaping in the United States: Trends, disparities and concurrent substance use, 2017-19

### Social Justice & Equity in the Cannabis Industry

As states continue to move away from the policies of prohibition, overall arrest rates are dropping but racial disparities remain.

Where did NH's funding for addiction treatment and recovery go?

Overall, use of higher potency cannabis, relative to lower potency cannabis, was associated with an increased risk of psychosis and CUD.

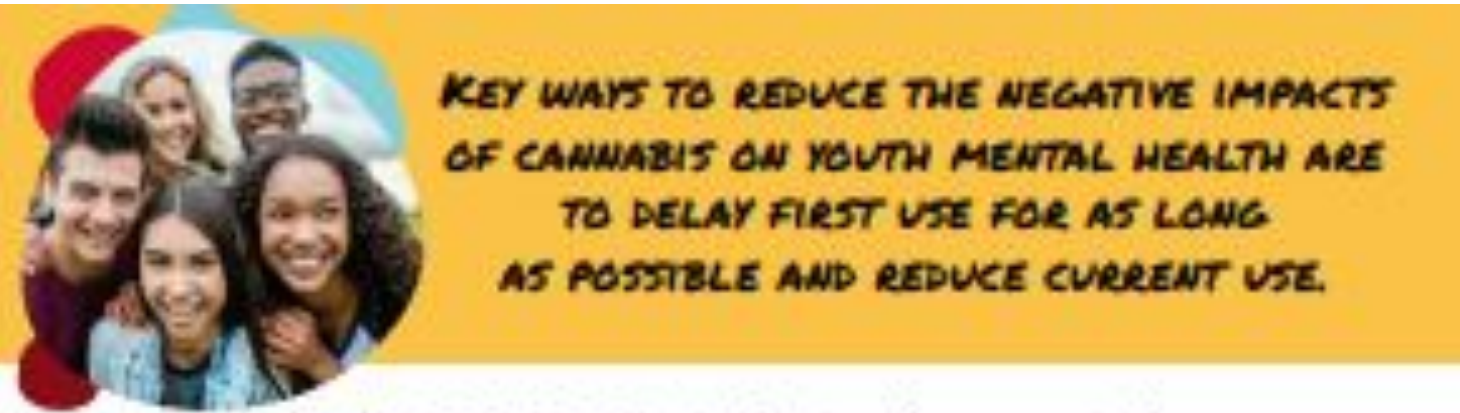


NAACP-NJ to Murphy: Give Us a Seat on Cannabis Commission or Face Lawsuit

DESPITE STATE RESTRICTIONS, RECREATIONAL CANNABIS COMPANIES USE MARKETING THAT APPEALS TO ADOLESCENTS

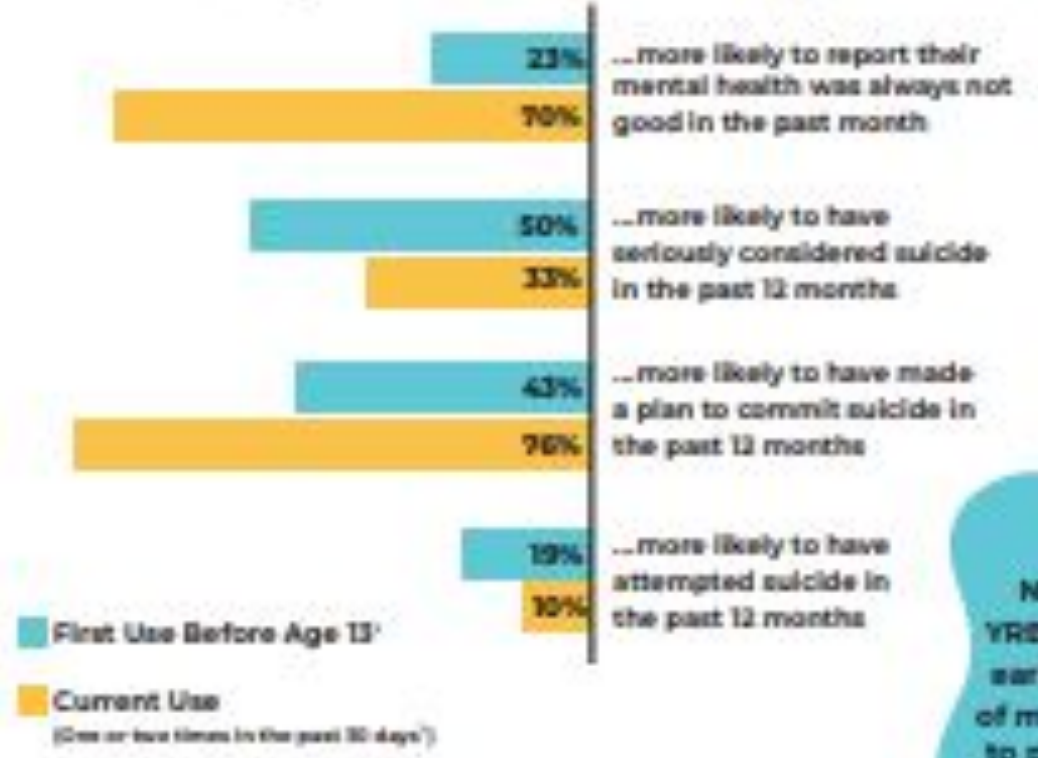
STUDY SUGGESTS WHAT MAKES MARIJUANA EDIBLES MOST ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG KIDS





**KEY WAYS TO REDUCE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CANNABIS ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ARE TO DELAY FIRST USE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND REDUCE CURRENT USE.**

**In the 2023 YRBS, students who reported early or current use of marijuana were...**



**New Hampshire's YRBS data shows that early and current use of marijuana are linked to poor mental health in youth.**

nearly **1 in 5 students** who first tried marijuana before age 13 had a suicide attempt that required medical attention in the past 12 months.



**Interested in learning more? Visit:**

- [Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\) | New Hampshire Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Youth Risk Behavior Survey | New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [YRBS Past Surveys and Reports | New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#)

# Impact of Cannabis on Youth Mental Health in New Hampshire



## Ease of Access

Research into the effects of cannabis legalization on youth is mixed. However, one research finding is consistent across all states: when cannabis is legalized, youth perceive it is easier to get. Data from New Hampshire's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) underscores the linkages between youth access to marijuana and poor mental health.

**In the 2023 YRBS, students who reported it was very easy to get marijuana were...**



**2.3x** more likely to report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks

**2.9x** more likely to have made one suicide attempt in the past year

**3x** more likely to have made a plan for suicide in the past 12 months

**3.2x** more likely to report 1) their mental health was always not good, and 2) they seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months

**6x more likely** to report requiring medical attention from a suicide attempt in the past year.



\*Compared to students who said it was very hard to get marijuana.



# Looking through the Public Health Lens

- Lessons learned from other states that have commercialized
- Past playbooks from tobacco and alcohol industries that have taken advantage of vulnerable populations for profit.
- NH data on youth and young adult substance misuse
- Equity policies to avoid harm to communities affected by the war on drugs



# Principles for Cannabis Policy & Regulation

*If New Hampshire moves in the direction of legalizing recreational cannabis through a commercial model, it is imperative to get the policy right from the start. Optimal cannabis commercialization policy for our state must utilize the best available scientific evidence to reduce public harm, limit youth and problematic use, and purposefully advance social justice and equity in the state.*

*The following principles must be included in a commercial policy and regulatory framework.*

## Principle #1 Protect Children and Youth



- Limit the potency of THC in flower cannabis and cannabis products to reduce the risk of dependency, psychosis, and other harmful effects.
- Prohibit any products, packaging or marketing that is attractive to children or youth, such as cannabis-infused beverages, flavored products intended for inhalation, flavored wrappers and products that resemble candy.
- Require buffer zones between retail outlets and schools (including colleges), public libraries and other youth-serving facilities.



## Principle #2 Promote Social Justice and Opportunities for Equity



- Expunge past criminal convictions for non-violent cannabis-related crimes.
- Make equity and social justice a priority in the cannabis industry. Create economic benefits for communities most negatively affected by the war on drugs and ensure representation on cannabis governing bodies.
- Prioritize equity in licensing applicants and hiring requirements (e.g. residents of communities impacted by high drug incarceration rates, people with past cannabis convictions).

## Principle #3 Protect Public and Population Health



- From the start of the regulatory process, place public health authorities in leadership roles and widely limit industry presence on regulatory bodies.
- Require health warnings in stores and provide safer use information to consumers.
- Inform vulnerable groups of the risks of use, such as low birth weight when used during pregnancy, psychosis and schizophrenia and other mental health effects.
- Extend smoke-free air restrictions to consistently prohibit smoking and vaping cannabis indoors in workplaces, multi-unit housing and public outdoors spaces.



## Principle #4 Ensure Appropriate Funding from Cannabis Revenue Directed to Efforts to Reduce Harms



- Apply tax revenue for substance misuse education, prevention, treatment and recovery and ensure an informed, adequately paid behavioral health workforce.
- Create mass media and social media campaigns from the start, before law is effective, to address (including, but not limited to);
  - Growing false perceptions of harmlessness and impact of use for youth.
  - Safe storage of cannabis and use around children.
  - Increased motor vehicle accidents.
  - Increased risk of psychosis and dependence.
  - Use during pregnancy and associated low birth weight.

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\*Principles based on recommendations from the Public Health Institute's Getting It Right From The Start program.

















2026 (retained from 25 session)

- HB 186, relative to legalization and regulation of cannabis
- House: Passed 208-135
- Senate: HHS committee recommend Inexpedient to Legislate.
- Full Senate votes 3/5/26

# PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONSIBLE CANNABIS POLICY & REGULATION

## ASSESSING HB 186

AS INTRODUCED 1/30/25

<b>PRINCIPLE #1</b> <b>PROTECTS CHILDREN AND YOUTH</b>	Limits potency of THC to reduce risk of dependency, psychosis, among others. 	Prohibits any products, packaging or marketing that is attractive to youth. 	Requires buffer zones between retail outlets and other youth-serving facilities. 
<b>PRINCIPLE #2</b> <b>PROMOTES SOCIAL JUSTICE &amp; EQUITY</b>	Expunges past criminal convictions for non-violent cannabis-related crimes. 	Makes equity and social justice a priority in the cannabis industry. 	
<b>PRINCIPLE #3</b> <b>PROTECTS PUBLIC AND POPULATION HEALTH</b>	Places public health authorities in leadership roles and limits industry presence on regulatory bodies. 	Informs vulnerable groups of the risks of use, such as psychosis and schizophrenia and other mental health effects. 	Extends smoke-free air restrictions to prohibit smoking and vaping cannabis indoors. 
<b>PRINCIPLE #4</b> <b>ENSURES FUNDING FROM CANNABIS REVENUE TO HARM REDUCTION EFFORTS</b>	Applies revenue for substance misuse education, prevention, treatment and recovery and a behavioral health workforce. 	Creates mass media and social media campaigns from the start, before the law is effective. 	<b>KEY:</b>  <i>Included in the bill</i>  <i>Not included in the bill</i>  <i>Partially in the bill but needs revisions</i>

# 2026















## SB 651, Relative to

### legalization and regulation of cannabis

- Senate- Laid on Table (likely done for the session).

# ASSESSING SB 651

AS INTRODUCED 1/22/26

PRINCIPLE #1 PROTECTS CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Limits potency of THC to reduce risk of dependency, psychosis, among others. 	Prohibits any products, packaging or marketing that is attractive to youth. 	Requires buffer zones between retail outlets and other youth-serving facilities. 
PRINCIPLE #2 PROMOTES SOCIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY	Expunges past criminal convictions for non-violent cannabis-related crimes. 	Makes equity and social justice a priority in the cannabis industry. 	
PRINCIPLE #3 PROTECTS PUBLIC AND POPULATION HEALTH	Places public health authorities in leadership roles and limits industry presence on regulatory bodies. 	Informs vulnerable groups of the risks of use, such as psychosis and schizophrenia and other mental health effects. 	Extends smoke-free air restrictions to prohibit smoking and vaping cannabis indoors. 
PRINCIPLE #4 ENSURES FUNDING FROM CANNABIS REVENUE TO HARM REDUCTION EFFORTS	Applies revenue for substance misuse education, prevention, treatment and recovery and a behavioral health workforce. 	Creates mass media and social media campaigns from the start, before the law is effective. 	<b>KEY:</b>  <i>Included in the bill</i>  <i>Not included in the bill</i>  <i>Partially in the bill but needs revisions</i>

# Strategies Targeting Our Youth



**Definitional Loopholes:** Using technical terminology (like “hemp-derived” vs “cannabis”) to evade age restrictions



**Unregulated Products:** Introducing new substances (kratom, nitrous oxide) with no youth protections.



**Deceptive Marketing:** Packaging addictive products as candy, school supplies, or video games.



**Regulatory Gaps:** Selling to minors before enforcement systems can catch up.

# PRODUCTS TARGETING NH YOUTH >>>

## Hemp-Derived THC Products



- **11% of U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> graders used delta-8 THC in 2023**—that’s 1-2 students in every average classroom.<sup>3</sup>
- Often **packaged to look like candy** or popular snack brands.
- **Poison control centers handled 2,362 adverse events** involving delta-8 between January 2021-February 2022.<sup>4</sup>

## Flavored Nitrous Oxide



- Sold in **flavored containers** designed to appeal to youth.
- Health effects include cough, rapid heart rate, paranoia, anxiety, breathing problems, and seizures.<sup>7</sup>
- **Promoted by popular influencers on TikTok.**<sup>8</sup>

## Kratom



- Described as an **“opioid-like substance”** containing compounds **13-46 times more potent than morphine.**<sup>5</sup>
- Associated with liver damage, seizures, and overdose deaths.<sup>6</sup>
- **Marketed as “natural” and “safe” despite serious health risks.** Comes in flavors like cotton candy (pictured).

## Deceptively Packaged Vapes



- Products designed as school supplies (pens, highlighters, erasers).
- Branded with characters from comics, movies, and video games known to appeal to minors.
- Include interactive video game capabilities.



# 2026 Bills To Follow



**SB 624** – restricting access to certain hemp-derived products

**Prohibits the sale** of any hemp-derived THC products to anyone under 21 and **strengthens penalties** for licensed establishments that continue to sell these products.

Senate Judiciary public hearing - **February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm.**



**SB 461** – relative to the definition of hemp

**Requires measuring total THC concentration,** including all forms that become psychoactive, **just like we measure total alcohol content in beverages.**

Senate Judiciary recommended the bill **OTP 5-0.** Now, the bill has

# 2026 Bills To Follow



**SB 557** – prohibiting sale of kratom products to anyone under 21 and providing for the regulation of the sale of kratom

Establishes a **21+ age requirement**, **prohibits child-targeted packaging**, **requires warning labels**, **mandates licensing**, and **bans synthetic versions**.

Senate Judiciary public hearing - **February 10, 1:50 pm**.



**HB 1630** – prohibiting the sale of nitrous oxide and certain inhalants for recreational purposes

Explicitly **prohibits flavored products marketed to youth**, while **protecting legitimate uses** (medical, food service, automotive).

House Commerce and Consumer public hearing - **February 11, 2:15 pm**

# 2026 Bills To Follow



**HB 1538** – preventing vape products from being marketed towards minors

**Vaping companies disguise nicotine products** as highlighters, USB drives, smartwatches, and candy **to hide use from parents and teachers.**

**HB 1538 prohibits** marketing vapes that imitate non-vape products, using **child-appealing characters, or including video game features.**

House Commerce and Consumer Affairs public hearing -  
**February 11, 2:00pm.**

# 2026 Bills To Follow



## **HB 1191 - relative to parental notice for non-academic surveys in public schools.**

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey is one of the most important tools New Hampshire has for understanding the challenges young people face, from substance use and mental health struggles to bullying and physical safety. School districts, public health professionals, and policymakers rely on this data to direct resources where kids need them most.

House Bill 1191 would effectively gut participation in the survey by switching from an opt-out to an opt-in consent model. Research consistently shows that opt-in requirements dramatically reduce response rates, which would make the data unreliable and leave communities flying blind when it comes to youth health trends.

The House Education Policy and Administration Committee public hearing is



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