

New Report Details and Debunks the Persisting Myth That Cannabis is a “Gateway Drug” - News

by Zach Harris

For over 100 years prohibitionists have tried to curb cannabis use with fantastical lies about the effects and long term consequences of taking even one hit of the devil’s lettuce. To this day lawmakers and lobbyists have stood by their gateway theory guns, but [researchers at the State University of New York New Paltz recently released a comprehensive report](#) that will hopefully close the book on the unfounded heroin and homelessness fear-mongering.

The recently published paper, aptly titled [“The Marijuana Gateway Phenomenon”](#) details a history of weed’s outlaw past and the lengths that detractors have gone to try and push the racially motivated foundation of cannabis prohibition. Without any actual medical or social dangers, talking heads from Nancy Reagan to Chris Christie and every era in between have instead relied on fantasies of hard drug use and violence down the line to try and advance their goals.

“From the 1970s onward, national anti-drug programs and like efforts implicating marijuana proliferated, were all unsupported by research. As no seriously harmful effects could be cited to justify these efforts, it became necessary to present marijuana as a gateway drug that ultimately lead to the use of harsher substances.” The report reads.

But because those lies went blindly accepted for so long, and because federally scheduled drugs are hard to do comprehensive research on, researchers say the myth of the gateway drug has caused exponentially more damage to society than the drug itself.

“Maintaining this myth not only wastes resources but actually harms numerous individuals, primarily members of minority groups, who are being criminalized,” Eve Waltermaurer, one of the paper’s four authors, said. “Energy which could be better applied toward reducing the truly harmful opioid epidemic, is instead spent on a fool’s errand.”

And while [Attorney General Jeff Sessions continues to mention marijuana in the](#)

[same breath as the country's climbing opioid overdose numbers](#), a number of studies have shown that medical marijuana is actually a significant factor in decreasing opiate use.

The report is incredibly clear in the origins and continued persistence of the gateway drug myth, but Waltermaurer and her co-authors are still not optimistic that their work will put an end to the highly cited fallacy; a stark reality about the continued resistance that still stands in the way of cannabis law reform.

“Facts have their limits. In this as in other highly controversial areas, they can inform policy makers, but don’t assure the adoption of fact-based public policy.” The report concludes. “As long as people and the public officials they elect have a political stake in them, myths such as the history of the marijuana gateway fallacy hang on.”