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## Marijuana as 'gateway' drug is political myth, Benjamin Center report says

*By Freeman staff*

Wednesday, September 6, 2017



NEW PALTZ, N.Y. >> The Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz has released a discussion brief, "The Marijuana Gateway Fallacy," in which the authors conclude the idea that marijuana use is a gateway to using harder drugs is a myth.

The report was co-authored by Eve Waltermaurer, an epidemiologist; Leah Mancini, a 2017 SUNY New Paltz graduate and Benjamin Center student researcher; and Gerald Benjamin, a distinguished professor of political science at SUNY New Paltz and director of the Benjamin Center.

They find the gateway drug theory was both promoted and persists for political purposes "despite the great and increasing weight of contrary scientific evidence."

[READ: 'The Marijuana Gateway Fallacy'](#)

The authors argue political use of the idea of marijuana as a gateway drug has done more social harm than marijuana use itself because the resulting drug policies have diverted attention from the opioid crisis and stigmatized individuals with criminal records.

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

In a press release announcing the issuance of the brief, the Benjamin Center said that "support for legalization of marijuana has become a majority sentiment in many jurisdictions" in recent years, "a trend largely driven by younger voters."

While New York in July 2014 joined states permitting the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, its use is strictly controlled and decriminalization for recreational use has not gained political traction despite its popularity with the public.

For a copy of the report, call the Benjamin Center at (845) 257-2901.

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URL: <http://www.dailyfreeman.com/general-news/20170906/marijuana-as-gateway-drug-is-political-myth-benjamin-center-report-says>

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