



Marijuana Policy

Current Georgia Landscape

Georgia Addiction Counselors Association

11/15/24

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Who is *Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy*?

Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy (GRMP),

- Launched in 2017
- Registered 501c4 nonprofit
- Promotes advocacy and educational efforts
- Uses evidence-based research, data, and policies

To prevent the expansion of the legalization of cannabis for medical use which lacks the approval of established medical associations

To prevent recreational legalization in Georgia



What are the key harm risks of marijuana?

- Youth harms – mental health, developing brain, addiction, gateway
- Adults – cannabis use disorder prevalence is rising + all harms below
- Roadway safety
- Workplace safety and productivity
- Maternal health and toddler health
- Justice, Drug Education, Treatment
- Secondhand smoke / quality of life
- Drug policy convergence

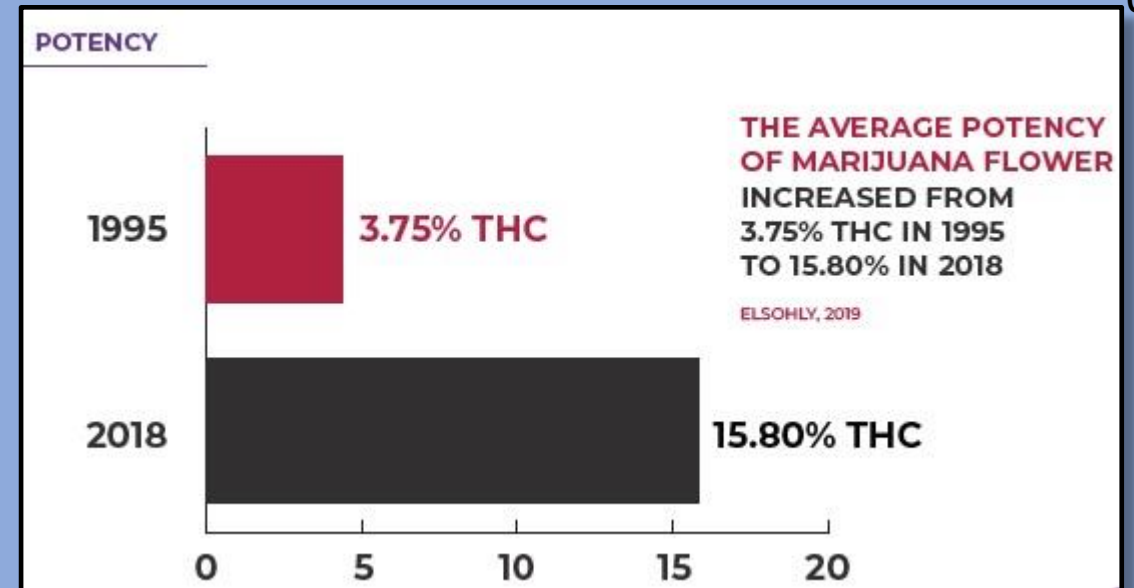
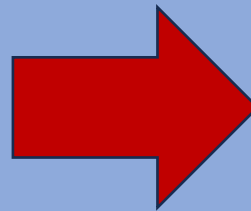




Why are we concerned?

Youth, synthetic cannabinoids, and THC potency

- In a 2023 survey, 30.4% self-reported marijuana use in the past year, and 11.4% of U.S. 12th-grade students reported Delta 8-THC use.¹
- More teens in Georgia enter treatment for marijuana than all other drugs combined.^{3,4}
- Rapidly expanding potency of THC





Why are we concerned?

Youth, marijuana use, and mental health

According to a 2019 meta-study published in JAMA Psychiatry⁵, adolescents who used cannabis had a:

- 37% increased risk of developing depression
- 18% increased risk of suicidal thoughts
- 50% higher likelihood of attempting suicide





Why are we concerned? (continued, part 2)

Roadways and workplaces

- Marijuana use can impair important skills required for safe driving by slowing reaction time and ability to make decisions, impairing coordination, and distorting perception.⁷
- Employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.⁸





Why are we concerned? (continued, part 3)

Justice, Education, and Access to Treatment

- Justice: Black Americans accounted for 39% of marijuana possession arrests in 2020 despite making up just 14% of the U.S. population and using marijuana at the same rate as white Americans.¹⁰
- Drug Education: Of 19 Georgia cities with decriminalized marijuana, only 2 offer extensive marijuana education, assessment for CUD and treatment referrals.¹¹
- Treatment: Of people who perceived a need for treatment but did not receive treatment, 24% did not know where to find treatment, and 21% had no health care coverage and could not afford it.¹²

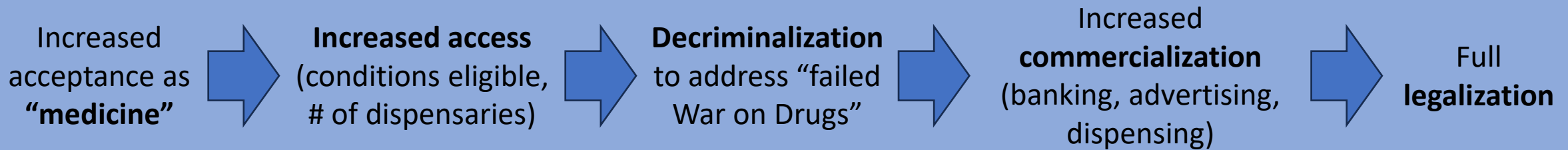




Why are we concerned? (continued, part 4)

Drug Policy Convergence

- Marijuana legalization “playbook” follows a pattern:

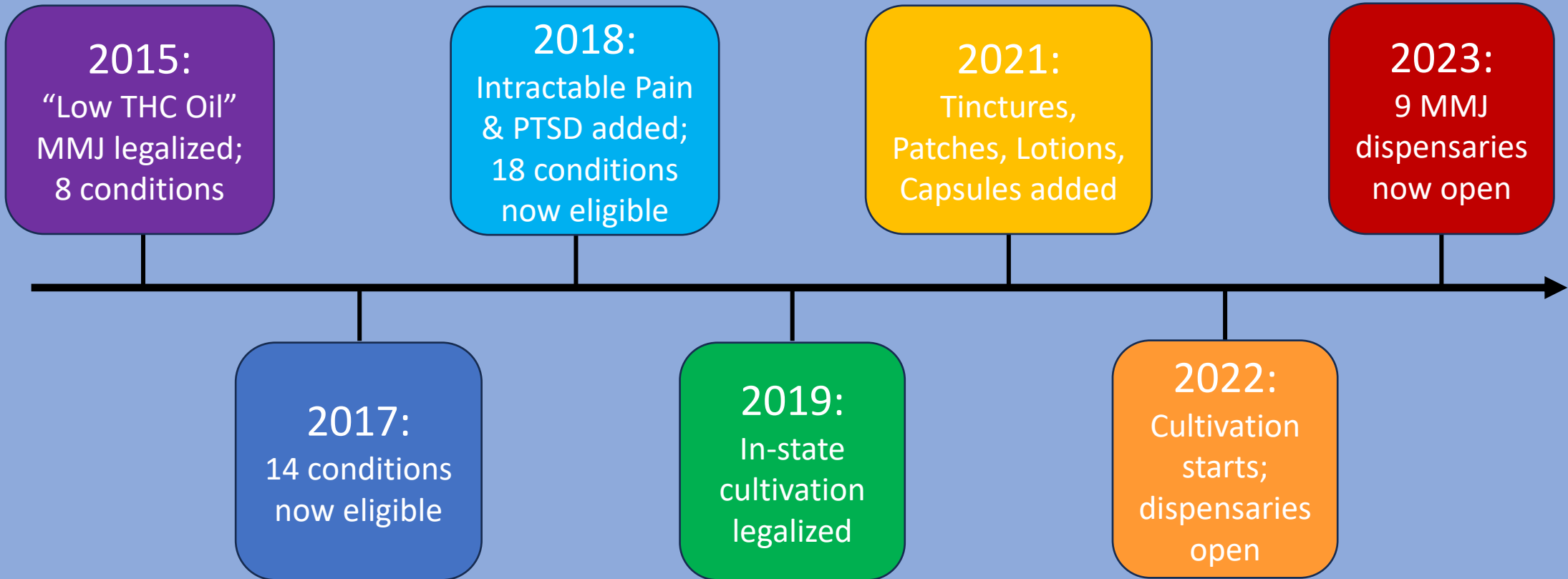


- Many drugs are following this legalization pattern, notably psychedelics (e.g. “mushrooms”).¹³
- In 2020, Oregon decriminalized heroin, cocaine and meth. In 2024, Oregon recriminalized these drugs.¹⁴





Brief history of marijuana in Georgia – 2015-2023



Brief history of marijuana in Georgia –2023/2024



Late 2023 / Pharmacies:
Georgia becomes 1st US state to allow
pharmacies to dispense medical marijuana;
120 sign up; DEA shuts it down a month later



Early 2024 / Hemp consumables:
Gummies, beverages legal but regulated:
Over 21(e.g. gummies, beverages); Delta-8
THC not addressed



Major Marijuana-related legislation



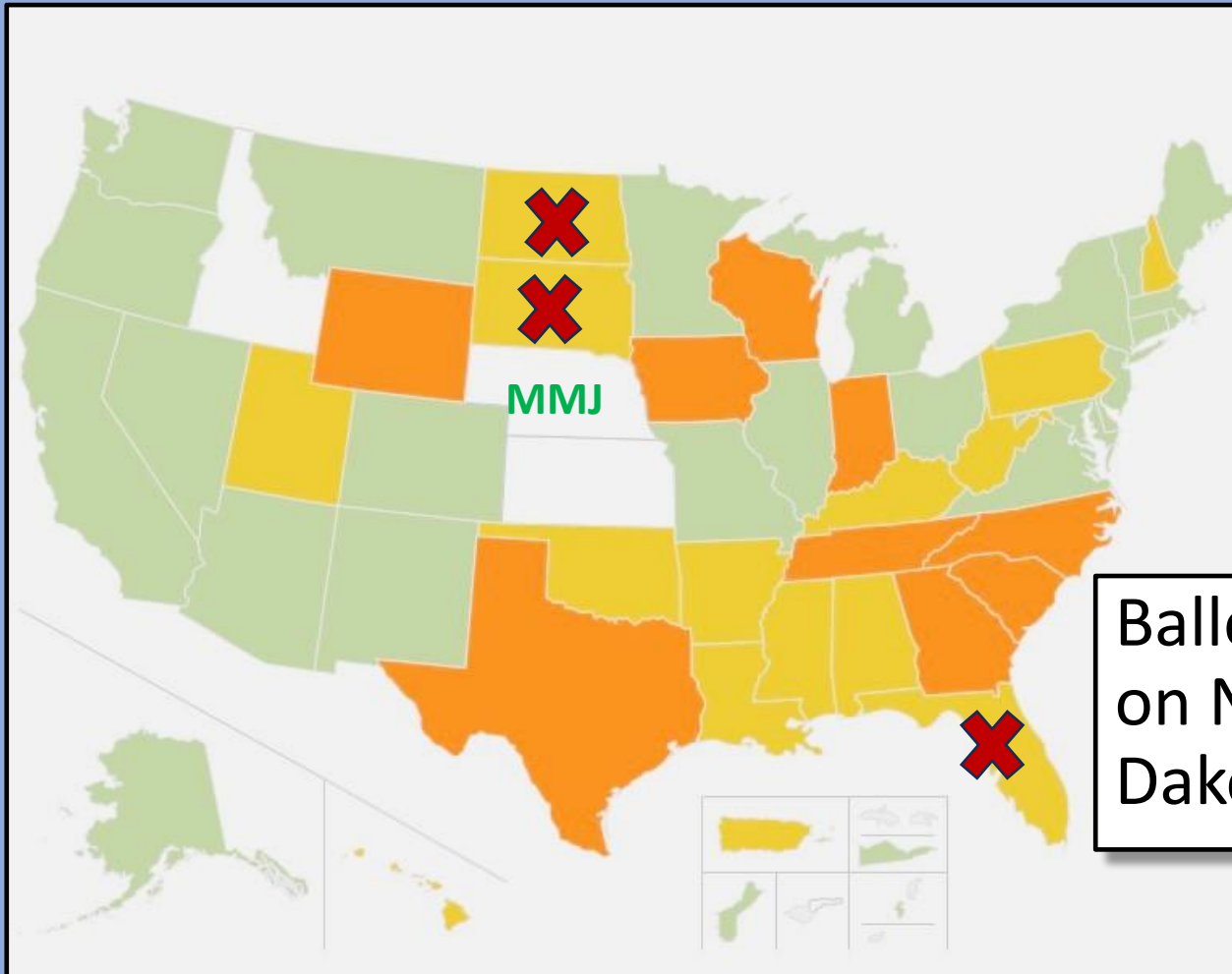
	Federal	State	Local
1. Recreational legalization	X	X	X
2. Medical Marijuana Dispensaries		X	
3. Hemp consumables	X	X	
4. Delta-8 THC & synthetic cannabinoids			X
5. Decriminalization/diversion programs	X	X	X
6. Rescheduling of marijuana	X		
7. Banking	X		

What exactly is legal in Georgia?



	Legal?	Notes
“Recreational” adult use	No	
“Medical” marijuana	Yes	“Low THC” Oil, up to 5% for 17 conditions
Consumables (e.g. gummies)	Yes Over 21	As of 10/1/24, per SB 494, Except Delta-8 not included
Delta-8 THC and synthetic cannabinoids	Loophole	Not against the law, omitted from SB 494

US map of marijuana legalization



US Summary

Rec	24 states: Recreational
Rec + Med	38 states: Rec. + medical
"Low"	10 states: CBD/Low THC oil

Ballot measures for marijuana in 4 states on Nov. 5: Florida, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska



What is Low THC Oil?

Low THC Oil is an oil that contains no more than 5 percent by weight of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), and has an amount of cannabidiol (CBD) equal to or greater than the amount of THC.

In Florida, the limit is 30%.

In Georgia, medical marijuana cannot be smoked.

In Florida and other states, it can be smoked.

But 5% THC can still get people high.



Qualifying conditions for a Low THC Oil Card

The Low THC Oil Registry allows fully-licensed Georgia physicians to certify patients who have a qualifying condition to obtain Low THC Oil legally. Physician certification is the only way patients can access Low THC Oil.

17 Conditions eligible for a Low THC Oil Card¹⁶

1. **AIDS**, when such syndrome is severe or end stage
2. **Alzheimer's disease**, severe or end stage
3. **Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis**, severe or end stage
4. **Autism spectrum disorder**, when (a) patient is 18 years of age or more, or (b) patient is less than 18 years of age and diagnosed with severe autism
5. **Cancer**, when such diagnosis is end stage or the treatment produces related wasting illness or recalcitrant nausea and vomiting





Qualifying conditions for a Low THC Oil Card

6. **Crohn's disease**
7. **Epidermolysis bullosa**
8. **Intractable pain**
9. **Mitochondrial disease**
10. **Multiple sclerosis**, when such diagnosis is severe or end stage
11. **Parkinson's disease**, when such diagnosis is severe or end stage
12. **Patient is in hospice program**, either as inpatient or outpatient
13. **Peripheral neuropathy**, when symptoms are severe or end stage
14. **Post-traumatic stress disorder** resulting from direct exposure to or witnessing of a trauma for a patient who is at least 18 years of age
15. **Seizure disorders** related to diagnosis of epilepsy or trauma-related head injuries
16. **Sickle cell disease**, when such diagnosis is severe or end stage
17. **Tourette's syndrome**, when such syndrome is diagnosed as severe



How many people use Low THC Oil? For what?

As of July 22, 2024, there were 20,592 people on the registry.¹⁷

The top five conditions for which cards are issues, in descending order, are:

1. Intractable pain
2. PTSD
3. Cancer
4. Peripheral neuropathy
5. Seizure disorders

Intractable pain and PTSD account for about 74% of the conditions for which cards are issued.

Where is medical marijuana available in Georgia?



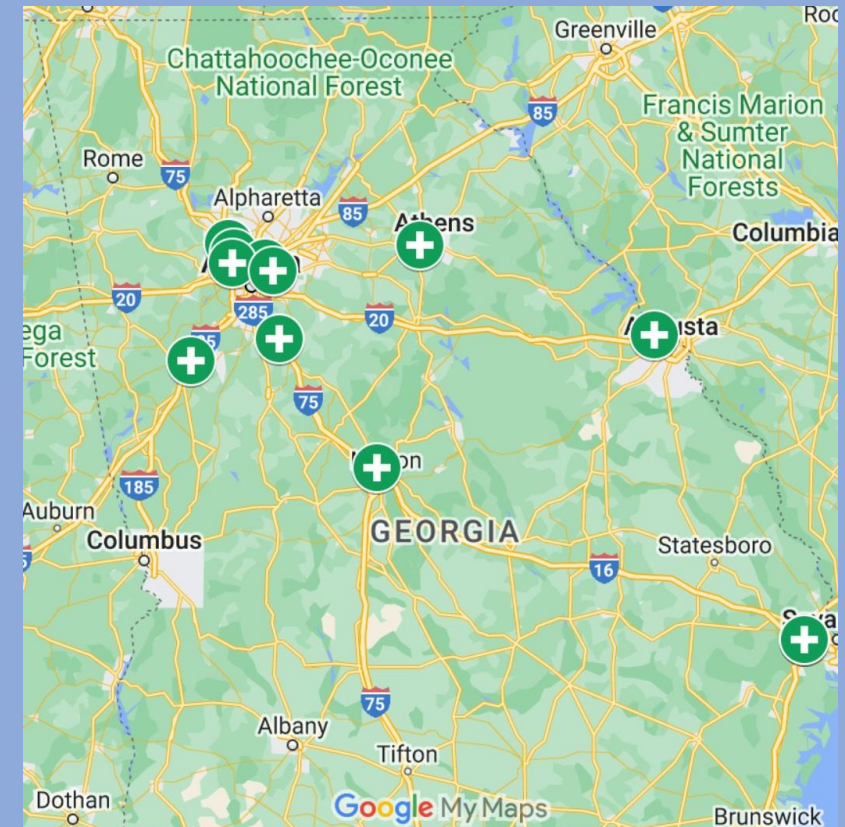
There are currently 13 medical marijuana dispensaries in Georgia

There can/will be up to 60 dispensaries

- Can increase as more Georgians register
- And as more production licenses are issued

Pharmacies have been approved in Georgia

- 1st state in the US
- DEA shut this down in November 2023
- But one in Augusta just started selling in Oct.



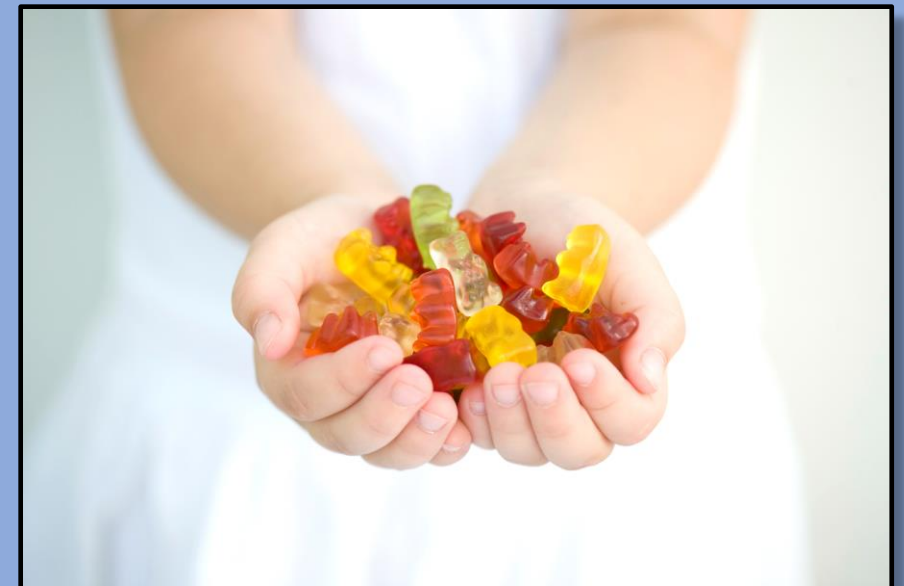


Hemp “consumables” (like gummy bears)

While “recreational” marijuana is not legal in Georgia, hemp consumables (like gummy bears) became legal in our state on October 1, 2024, due to Georgia SB 494 which was adopted into law this year.¹⁹

These consumables will be

- tested
- labels and packaging regulated
- 21 year old minimum age for selling
- *delta-9 THC* limited to < 0.3% dry weight

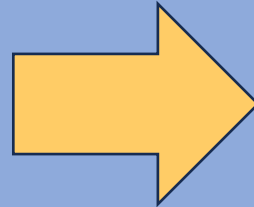


Hemp “consumables” (one exception)



Delta-8 THC
and other synthetic cannabinoids

NOT
addressed by law



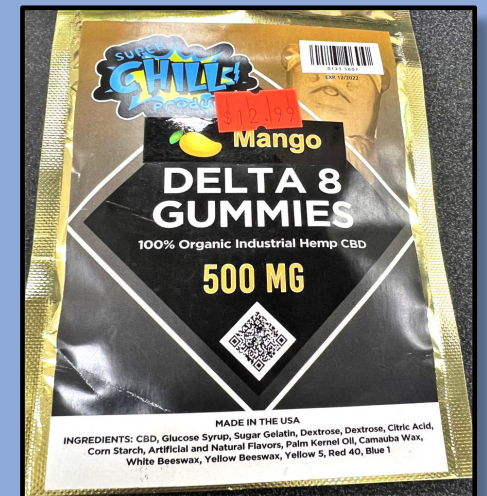


What is Delta-8 THC?

The 2018 US Farm Bill legalized hemp farming, noting that *delta-9* THC (the cannabinoid in marijuana that is psychoactive) must be $< 0.3\%$.

However, innovators began taking naturally occurring *delta-8* cannabinoids in marijuana, which have low THC, but chemically converting them to create semi-synthetic high-THC versions of marijuana.²⁰

Delta-8 THC can have unlimited THC levels in Georgia.





Can the Delta-8 THC be closed?

The FDA, Georgia Board of Pharmacy, and Georgia's Attorney General all warn about the extensive dangers of Delta 8.^{21,22}

19 US states have "closed the Delta 8 loophole".²³

Because Delta-8 THC was not addressed in US law, or in Georgia law, and these products can have unlimited THC levels without regulation, this creates *de facto* recreational legalization in Georgia.^{24,25}



Can the Delta-8 THC loophole be closed?



If we don't, we'll continue to see these billboards:

You can see this at AlpineDispensary.com.



And 95% THC will continue to be legal...



Shop / Vape Products / Delta 8 THC Vape Cartridge 95% Δ8 – Pineapple Express



Delta 8 THC Vape Cartridge 95% Δ8 – Pineapple Express

★★★★★ (6 customer reviews)

\$59.99

We are proud to present to you THC Δ8 Vaping the way it should be... zero residual toxins, a premium 510 thread iKruiser cartridge with an acrylic BPA free non-clogging barrel tip. In addition, our high potency distillate contains no PG/VG and offers noticeable psychotropic relief upon the first few puffs. You should find yourself with a THC Δ8 experience like none other due to our custom terpene profiles. One reason THC Δ8 has gained so much popularity is that is known to provide an uplifting euphoric sensation with less chance of paranoia no matter which strain is consumed; Indica, Hybrid or Sativa.



ADD TO CART

SKU: d8VapeCartPineapple Categories: THC Delta-8, Vape Products



Decriminalization and Diversion programs

Of 19 cities and counties who have passed municipal ordinances to lower marijuana penalties, and/or create court diversion programs, only two have extensive programs that offer:

- Drug education
- Assessments for Cannabis Use Disorder
- Voluntary referrals to treatment

Marijuana is not just a “criminal / not criminal” issue, it is also a potential health issue.

Attempts at criminal justice reform without diversion programs does not address potential addiction.

Marijuana possession ordinances under 1 ounce in Georgia

This unofficial compilation prepared by Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy, Michael Mumper, mmumper@GaMarijuanaPolicy.org

Analysis of key ordinance components in Georgia Cities/Counties:

Georgia City or County	Age groups indicated	Fines for each offense up to	Court date required with parent?	Substance Misuse Prevention / Education program?		Assessments for potential Cannabis Use Disorder?		Treatment Referral?
				1st offense	2 nd /3 rd off.	1st offense	2 nd /3 rd off.	
Athens '22	All	\$35	-	-	-	-	-	-
Atlanta '17	All	\$75	-	-	-	-	-	-
Augusta '19	<i>Municode not updated</i>	\$150/150/300						
Camilla '23	All	\$35						
Chamblee '19	Under 18 18+	\$75/225/225/325	YES, for <18 for 1 st off.	-	YES 2 nd /3 rd off. Voluntary w/ \$150 refund	-	-	-
Clarkston '16	All	\$75	-	-	-	-	-	-
Doraville '20	Under 18 18+	\$75/150/300	YES, for <18 for 1 st off.					
East Point '23	All	\$75						
Fairburn	All	\$75/150/300/450	-	-	-	-	-	Poss./Man.
Fayetteville '20 updated '21	Under 18, 18-20, 21+	\$125/250/500 + \$200 add'l for program/assess	YES, for <18 for 1 st off.	YES, for <18, 18-20 Mandatory	YES, for all age groups, Mandatory	YES, for <18, 18-20 Mandatory	YES, for all age groups Mandatory	YES, all ages, if needed, Voluntary
Forest Park '18	All	\$100/300/judge	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fulton County '18	All	\$75/150/300/400/500+60days	-	-	-	-	-	Possibly Mandated
Kingsland '18	All	\$150 or service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Macon-Bibb '19	All	\$75	-	-	-	-	-	-
Savannah '18	All	\$150 or service	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Fulton '18	All	\$150 (50% to rehab+prevention)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Statesboro '18	All	\$500 or service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stonecrest '22	All	\$100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tybee Island '21	All	\$150	-	-	-	-	-	-





Should marijuana be rescheduled?

Marijuana is currently in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, as is heroin, methamphetamines and LSD. US HHS has proposed Schedule III.

Schedule I drugs meet two key criteria:

- High potential for abuse
- No accepted medical use

Schedule III would:

- Allow more research of marijuana
- Still keep marijuana as an illegal drug
- Allow marijuana companies to deduct certain expenses, e.g. advertising

Should marijuana be rescheduled? (continued, part 2)



GRMP believes that marijuana should remain a Schedule I drug. Why?

1. Even though marijuana is not as dangerous as heroin, it still meets the two criteria for a Schedule 1 drug:
 - ✓ There is a high potential for abuse, current research shows that 30% of marijuana users have a cannabis use disorder, and rising.²⁶
 - ✓ No currently accepted medical use (CAMU) – Four cannabinoids have been approved by the FDA: Epidiolex, Marinol, Cesmet and Syndros.²⁷ The marijuana “flower” itself, however, has no CAMU.
 - ✓ Almost no major medical associations unequivocally support marijuana as medicine; all call for more research, dosing standards.

Should marijuana be rescheduled? (continued, part 3)



GRMP believes that marijuana should remain a Schedule I drug. Why?

2. Further research has already been enabled by the Administration's HR 8454 in 2022, streamlining approval, manufacturing, and reporting of marijuana studies.

Since January 2023, over 5,000 marijuana-related studies have been published.²⁸



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