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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CANNABIS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1       SECTION 1. The legislature finds that marijuana, also  
2 known as cannabis, is a plant with psychoactive properties  
3 derived primarily from its main psychoactive component  
4 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). With more legalization occurring  
5 across the nation, there have been changing trends that affect  
6 youth cannabis use such as greater public acceptance, declining  
7 perception of risk, increasing availability of new products,  
8 higher potency, pervasive marketing with products that appeal to  
9 youth, and varying content of THC in similar products.

10       The legislature further finds that addressing cannabis use  
11 among youth is a major public health concern. In 2022, the  
12 department of health reported that youth lifetime use was at  
13 33.2 per cent while use in the past month was at 20.3 per cent.  
14 Treatment agencies for cannabis use disorder reported that 63.5  
15 per cent of kids presenting for treatment do so because of  
16 problems stemming from overuse of cannabis. As of 2023,  
17 cannabis use by youth in the past month, a better determinative



1 indicator for the effects of legalization, increased albeit  
2 modestly. While youth cannabis use declined overall in 2023,  
3 older students consistently reported higher usage at twenty-two  
4 per cent, suggesting a need for targeted interventions aimed at  
5 older adolescents. Also, cannabis use among girls increased to  
6 eighteen per cent.

7       The legislature also finds that there is general agreement  
8 from available data that cannabis use is not healthy for young  
9 people. Except for some refractory epilepsy and seizure  
10 disorders, there is no established beneficial use of cannabis in  
11 children. There is, however, extensive evidence that cannabis  
12 use causes serious, permanent harm on developing brains.  
13 Studies show that early cannabis use can impair adolescent brain  
14 development causing cognitive impairment and underdeveloped  
15 decision-making as well as functional impairments in attention  
16 and memory. There are increased risks for the early onset of  
17 psychiatric conditions, such as schizophrenia. Early cannabis  
18 use can also lead to cannabis use disorder, suicidal ideation,  
19 poor school performance, increased high school dropout rates,  
20 and negative effects on male fertility. Physicians, parents,  
21 and children alike need to be aware of these risks.



1       The legislature additionally finds that prevention  
2 practices can protect youth from the potential harm of cannabis  
3 use as well as be a link for youth to access treatment. It is  
4 important to build and support a diverse and skilled public  
5 health workforce for cannabis prevention and treatment that  
6 provides health support functions and ensures continuous quality  
7 improvement to develop an organizational infrastructure that  
8 prevents the harms of cannabis and improves public health. It  
9 is also critical for Hawaii reassure the community that it has  
10 the capacity to address prevention and treatment for youth  
11 cannabis use.

12       There are a number of informational, media, and evidence-  
13 based prevention strategies that communities could implement to  
14 prevent youth cannabis use, such as: public education, local  
15 policy, environmental scans, data monitoring, and community  
16 collaborations. Public health and education as well as media  
17 campaigns are more effective if the effort develops and is  
18 implemented in a comprehensive public health and education  
19 campaign. Public education messages can decrease the  
20 misconceptions about cannabis as well as build support for  
21 prevention strategies, increase knowledge about relevant aspects



1 of the law, and establish positive social norms and healthy  
2 beliefs. Programs and media campaigns that educate youth about  
3 risks and consequences of cannabis use and emphasize refusal  
4 skills have been and will continue to be important strategies to  
5 prevent youth cannabis use.

6 Hawaii can build upon other states' successful prevention-  
7 oriented, media-based interventions designed to reduce  
8 adolescent cannabis use using similar message strategies.  
9 Media-based campaigns are attractive as intervention strategies  
10 given the potential economies of scale associated with media  
11 interventions as well as youth involvement with and influence by  
12 media. Media-based interventions show reductions in cannabis  
13 use when in-school media and promotional materials are combined  
14 with community-based efforts, especially when positive autonomy  
15 and competence goals are linked with non-use.

16 Prevention programs work best when combining a community  
17 focus on a population segment with an environmental strategy to  
18 address social norms and economic conditions to influence  
19 behavior. Key components of prevention include education and  
20 awareness in community campaigns, skill-building programs,  
21 family-based prevention and education, family strengthening



1 programs, peer interventions, community engagement, coalition  
2 building, and policy and regulation.

3 The legislature further finds that cannabis is habit  
4 forming and can lead to addiction, especially for adolescents.  
5 Adolescents who start using cannabis before the age of fourteen  
6 are four times more likely to become addicted by the time they  
7 are adults. Cannabis addiction is more common among teens than  
8 adults because their brains are still developing and are far  
9 more sensitive to the chemicals in cannabis. Therefore,  
10 cannabis use peaks in teen years and early twenties.

11 Cannabis, like other addictive drugs, demonstrates  
12 heightened behavioral responses and altered brain activity as  
13 well as withdrawal symptoms of irritability, sleep problems,  
14 anxiety, and cravings. The high potency of cannabis currently  
15 available is noteworthy because it increases the  
16 unpredictability of a reaction, accounting for a rise in  
17 emergency room visits due to the effect of cannabis. However,  
18 since cannabis does not generally pose an immediate threat to  
19 health, it can be more challenging to stop using the drug.  
20 Moreover, many people who later develop addiction to other  
21 drugs, first started with cannabis.



1       The legislature also finds that as cannabis use increases,  
2   so will the need for treatment for cannabis use disorders.  
3   Approximately three in ten people who use cannabis have cannabis  
4   use disorder. The risk of developing cannabis use disorder is  
5   stronger in people who start using cannabis during youth or  
6   adolescence and who use cannabis more frequently. Most teens  
7   who enter substance use disorder treatment programs in Hawaii  
8   and other states report that cannabis is the main or only drug  
9   they use. Teens who identify other drugs as their primary drug  
10  of choice often say they use cannabis too.

11       Adolescent substance use disorder treatment refers to a  
12  range of interventions designed to help young people overcome  
13  issues related to the use of alcohol, drugs, or other  
14  substances. Since adolescents have unique developmental,  
15  psychological, and social needs, treatment approaches are  
16  tailored specifically to this age group, focusing on building  
17  healthy behaviors, coping mechanisms, and support systems.  
18  Behavioral therapies are the best practice and are available for  
19  treating cannabis use disorders using motivational enhancement,  
20  cognitive therapies, and motivational incentives. Early  
21  identification and treatment can prevent long-term substance



1 dependence and help adolescents build healthier futures. While  
2 engaging in a supportive and structured program increases the  
3 chances of successful recovery.

4 The purpose of this Act is to protect children from health  
5 risks associated with cannabis use by implementing extensive,  
6 well-funded public health protections. Specifically, this Act  
7 appropriates funds for:

- 8 (1) A public health and informational campaign;  
9 (2) Grants to prevent substance misuse among youth; and  
10 (3) Grants to treat substance use disorder among youth.

11 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$4,000,000 or so much  
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
14 sum of \$2,000,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for  
15 fiscal year 2026-2027 for the department of health to develop  
16 and implement comprehensive messaging in a public health and  
17 informational campaign that includes media regarding youth  
18 cannabis use and its impact on public health and safety. The  
19 campaign may inform the public about any new laws related to  
20 cannabis and the continuing risks that cannabis use poses to  
21 children. A multi-media campaign may include a mix of digital,



1 social media, radio, and television advertising, along with  
2 materials for schools and community groups.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
4 of health for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,000,000 or so much  
7 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
8 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
9 2026-2027 for the alcohol and drug abuse division of the  
10 department of health to administer grants for community-based  
11 organizations to provide youth and families with evidenced-based  
12 prevention services that prevent substance misuse among youth,  
13 especially youth cannabis use.

14 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
15 of health for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$5,000,000 or so much  
18 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the  
19 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
20 2026-2027 for the alcohol and drug abuse division of the  
21 department of health to administer grants for community-based





1 organizations to provide youth and families with evidenced-based  
2 treatment services, such as residential, intensive outpatient,  
3 and outpatient programs, to treat substance use disorder among  
4 youth, especially youth cannabis use.

5 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
6 of health for the purposes of this Act.

7 SECTION 5. The department of health shall submit a report  
8 to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the  
9 convening of the regular session of 2027, of its findings and  
10 recommendations, including:

- 11 (1) The manner in which funds received pursuant to this  
12 Act have been expended;  
13 (2) The particular service providers involved;  
14 (3) The number of persons who have been served;  
15 (4) A description of the services provided;  
16 (5) Measurable outcomes; and  
17 (6) Any proposed legislation.

18 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.  
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INTRODUCED BY: 

JAN 17 2025



# H.B. NO. 814

**Report Title:**

DOH; Youth Cannabis Use; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the Department of Health to develop and implement a public health and informational campaign; administer grants to prevent substance misuse among youth; and administer grants to treat substance use disorder among youth.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

