

# THE DAILY ORANGE

## Legalizing recreational marijuana shouldn't worry New York residents

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March 4, 2019

The legalization of recreational marijuana isn't as scary as it sounds.

It's proved to be a new source of tax revenue. The two biggest states that have already legalized recreational marijuana are California and Colorado — they've reported 2.75 billion and 1.56 billion dollars in cannabis sales, respectively.

In New York, medical marijuana has proven popular, and now Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) is pushing for an expedited time table in legalizing recreational marijuana.

That timeline shouldn't raise concerns for residents. In fact, the state needs to pass legislation regarding marijuana legalization to regulate the legal age of consumption, tax structures, revenue allocation and how to repay those who have been harmed by its criminalization.

"I'm not worried about the expedited time table, if the legislation is effective and embraces the free market principles — innovation and benefits will follow," John Torrens, a professor of entrepreneurial practice at Syracuse University, said. "Logistics, specifically in taxation and banking, are some of the biggest setbacks."

Colorado presents the best long-term picture of the significance of marijuana tax revenue because it has been recreationally legal there since 2014. During that time, the state has managed to gather almost \$930 million in revenue through taxation.

New York would see economic benefits through tax revenue and savings from the lack of prosecutions over marijuana-related offenses. The Cato Institute estimates that state and local governments spend \$29 billion on drug prohibition annually, and the federal government spends \$18 billion annually.

With legislation also comes the opportunity for New York to decide how to repay those who have been harmed by marijuana's criminalization.

Some people argue that the first step is allowing all marijuana-related charges to be dropped, thus releasing users and dealers from jail or impending sentencing. Others say that New York state should also pay remittance to individuals charged with these crimes and the communities most affected by the criminalization of marijuana.

Paying remittance is a mistake. New York should follow Colorado's lead and instead use marijuana taxes to fund local education projects — everything from libraries to schools, community centers and daycares.

All in all, marijuana legalization is coming. The conversation now should shift toward how New York states handles this rollout.