



MAHWAH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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A message from Mahwah Police Chief, Stephen Jaffe

The State of New Jersey drafted three Bills that Governor Murphy signed into Law on February 22nd, 2021 to legalize, regulate, and decriminalize marijuana.

While voters in New Jersey voted to legalize cannabis for adults, Trenton has taken the extraordinary leap to pass a law that goes far beyond the voter mandate to include the de-facto-legalization of marijuana and alcohol for children. Overreaching even further, the law criminalizes the good-faith actions of a police officer who, smelling marijuana, tries to investigate the underage use or possession by a child.

The Mahwah Police Department wants our parents to be aware and informed that we will be forced to alter how we handle our interactions with individuals who are in possession of marijuana and/or alcohol in any public place including a school setting as a result of these new laws.

This law inexplicably bans police officers from notifying parents the first time their children are found to be using or in possession of marijuana or alcohol.

As public backlash against this unprecedented legislative threat to children grows, Trenton now is signaling that there will be a "clean-up" bill that will allow officers to provide notification to parents when children are caught using or possessing marijuana or alcohol.

The cleanup language as proposed does nothing to correct this fatally flawed legislation. Officers would continue to face the potential of serious criminal deprivation of civil rights charges for the common-sense act of simply investigation the underage use or possession of marijuana or alcohol by minors.

Not only does this dangerous legislation continue to prevent parents from being notified (because police will not be able to realistically investigate in the first place), it guarantees that police will be powerless to investigate and address the use and abuse of alcohol and marijuana by kids in our schools, parks, beaches, and other places of gathering.

This legislation turns kids and law enforcement into collateral damage for political interests and gain in New Jersey.

It is wrong. It is indefensible. And it must be fixed. Please reach out to your Legislators to voice your concerns and have the proper legislative correction to the Bills be rectified.

"A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY"