

# Former U.S. Labor Secretary's Concerns on Cannabis Legalization

In a recent interview with C-SPAN, Marty Walsh, former U.S. labor secretary and ex-mayor of Boston, shared his apprehensions regarding the trajectory of cannabis legalization in the United States.

## Personal Worries and Past Opposition

Walsh, who has been candid about his own struggles with substance use disorder and subsequent recovery, expressed deep concerns about the expanding landscape of marijuana legalization. Reflecting on his tenure as mayor of Boston, he acknowledged his opposition to the 2016 ballot initiative that led to Massachusetts legalizing cannabis for adult use. He also highlighted his resistance to a Democratic National Committee proposal endorsing cannabis legalization in 2020.

## The Slippery Slope of Legalization

Throughout the interview, Walsh emphasized his worries about what he perceives as a “slippery slope” of cannabis reform. He traced the evolution of advocacy efforts from decriminalization to medical legalization and finally to full adult-use legalization. His apprehensions extend beyond cannabis, as he expressed concerns about simultaneous efforts to legalize opioids in certain regions.

## Accountability for Substance Manufacturers

Walsh urged accountability for manufacturers of potentially harmful substances, drawing parallels between the marketing tactics of alcohol and cannabis companies. He stressed the importance of holding these entities responsible for the societal costs of addiction, therapy, and recovery, particularly citing the example of opioid manufacturer Purdue Pharma.

## Support for Pardons Despite Opposition

Despite his general opposition to cannabis legalization, Walsh expressed support for President Joe Biden’s pardons of individuals with low-level federal marijuana offenses on their records. He pledged to assist those pardoned in navigating employment opportunities and overcoming the barriers posed by prior convictions.

## Public Opinion vs. Personal Stance

While Walsh continues to voice his opposition to cannabis legalization, recent polling data indicates that a significant majority of Massachusetts residents—65 percent—support the state’s decision to legalize cannabis. Despite this public sentiment, Walsh remains steadfast in his concerns about the broader implications of cannabis reform.

As discussions surrounding cannabis legalization continue to evolve across the United States, Marty Walsh’s remarks underscore the complex intersection of personal experiences, policy considerations, and public opinion shaping the national dialogue on drug policy reform.

