Position Statement – Legalization of “Medical Marijuana” • April 2019

The Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics opposes the legalization of medical marijuana outside of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval process. Marijuana is not regulated by the FDA, therefore its purity, potency, and consistency cannot be reliably verified, and efficacy, as well as risk-benefit analysis are not determined. Though anecdotal accounts have shown that certain cannabinoids could benefit children with specific chronic debilitating diseases, there have been few published studies to date about the effects on cannabinoids in the pediatric population. For this reason, our organization strongly advocates for research and development of pharmaceutical cannabinoids and supports a review of policies promoting research on the medical use of these compounds.

Non-FDA approved “medical” marijuana remains listed as a Schedule I controlled substance. There is no official guidance for pediatricians to follow when recommending marijuana and they would be in violation of federal law doing so.

Currently, however, there are four pharmaceutical grade medications, THC and CBD based, that have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are available for physicians to use as clinically indicated. For this reason alone, a law to legalize medical marijuana is unnecessary.

Our position is informed by the lack of available research and supported by evidence-based policy and the position of the American Academy of Pediatrics.