

Universal Declaration of Cannabis

(A model, aspirational declaration to recognize and regulate adult cannabis use and commerce at municipal, provincial/state, national and international levels.)

Preamble

Recognizing the fundamental failure of prohibitionist policies to eliminate cannabis use and commerce, and the disproportionate social, economic, and political harms those policies have inflicted upon individuals, families, communities, and the environment;

Affirming the intrinsic right of all adults to bodily autonomy and to access substances subject only to reasonable and evidence-based regulation that effectively protects public health, public safety, social equity, and the natural environment;

Acknowledging the urgent need for robustly regulated markets that effectively displace illegal supply chains, ensure mandatory product safety and traceability, promote genuine restorative justice and economic inclusion, support rigorous scientific research, and respect established cultural and Indigenous uses;

Recalling international human rights obligations, recognizing the primacy of public health as a regulatory driver, and upholding the sovereign authority of governments at all levels to enact appropriate law and regulation consistent with these principles;

We hereby declare the following principles and comprehensive framework to guide the legalization, regulation, and international cooperation on cannabis.

I. Definitions (selected)

Cannabis — All parts of the plant *Cannabis sativa* L., whether growing or not, and its seeds, extracts, concentrates, and derivatives, including but not limited to products containing THC, CBD, or other cannabinoids, intended for human consumption or use.

Adult — A person who has reached the legal age for regulated cannabis access as determined by each specific jurisdiction (recommendation: [21 years], with allowance for lower ages where historically and legally appropriate).

Licensed Commercial Operator — An entity or individual authorized under law to cultivate, process, manufacture, distribute, import/export, test, or sell cannabis or cannabis products.

Decriminalization vs. Legalization — Decriminalization removes criminal penalties for personal possession and use; legalization creates a comprehensive regulatory framework and legal market for all aspects of production, commerce, and use.

Restorative Measures — Policies and programs intended to repair harms caused by criminalization, including mandatory record expungement, provision of reparations or economic support, and prioritization of licensing for those disproportionately affected by prohibition.

II. Core Principles

Harm Reduction & Public Health — Regulations shall prioritize reducing harms related to consumption, impaired operation of vehicles/machinery, and contamination of products.

Safety & Product Integrity — Mandatory requirements for testing, labeling, packaging, and supply-chain traceability shall be implemented to protect consumers.

Equity & Restorative Justice — Jurisdictions shall institute active measures to repair harms caused by criminalization, including universal record relief, community reinvestment, and priority licensing for affected communities and individuals.

Subsidiarity & Proportionality — Decision-making and regulation shall respect municipal, provincial/state, and national competences while enabling minimum standards for effective cross-border coordination.

Scientific Evidence & Research — Policies shall be evidence-based and actively facilitate independent research into therapeutic uses, public health impacts, environmental effects, and socioeconomic outcomes.

Sustainability — Cultivation and processing shall adhere to strict environmental protections concerning water, soil health, biodiversity, energy use, and waste management.

Children & Minors Protection — Strong, enforceable measures shall be enacted to prevent youth access, prohibit marketing targeting minors, and to provide evidence-based education on associated risks.

International Cooperation & Trade Prudence — Jurisdictions shall facilitate information-sharing, mutual legal clarity, and trade where such commerce is consistent with public health objectives and national sovereign law.

III. Rights and Protections

Adult Use — Adults aged [Adult Age] shall legally possess, use, and obtain cannabis from authorized sources within clearly defined limits set by their jurisdiction.

Privacy — Personal consumption in private settings shall be protected from disproportionate surveillance; law enforcement access shall strictly adhere to due process standards and judicial authorization.

Anti-Discrimination — No discrimination in employment, housing, or access to services shall occur solely on the basis of lawful cannabis use outside of safety-sensitive roles; reasonable, impairment-focused workplace safety rules may apply.

Medical Access — Patients shall have timely, affordable, and clinically appropriate access to cannabis-based medical therapies; medical and clinical research shall be prioritized and facilitated.

IV. Regulatory Framework (Model Elements)

Licensing Categories

- Cultivation (micro, small, commercial, indoor/outdoor)
- Processing & manufacturing (edibles, extracts, topicals)
- Testing laboratories (accredited, independent, and strictly audited)
- Distribution/wholesaling
- Retail (storefronts, delivery, online)
- Ancillary services (transport, storage, specialized packaging)

Product Safety and Testing

- Mandatory third-party laboratory testing for potency, contaminants (pesticides, heavy

metals, microbial contaminants), and residual solvents.

- Batch traceability (seed-to-sale tracking) system required across the supply chain.
- **Standardized Labeling:** Must include ingredients, cannabinoid content (mg per serving and per package), recommended serving size, mandatory health warnings, batch/lot number, date of testing, and producer license ID.

Packaging & Marketing

- Mandatory child-resistant, opaque, and tamper-evident packaging.
- Mandatory plain packaging options; bans or strict limits on advertising that appeals to minors or employs sexually suggestive or promotional imagery.
- Restrictions analogous to established tobacco/alcohol regulations regarding broadcast and digital advertisements near schools and on youth-targeted media.

Age Limits & Possession

- Minimum age for purchase/possession (recommendation: [21], minimum [18] as allowed); possession limits defined by weight and product-type (e.g., possession limit of [X grams] of flower and an equivalent amount in concentrates/edibles).

Home Cultivation

- Allow home cultivation within set limits (e.g., number of plants per adult household), subject to reasonable safety, landlord/condominium rules, and child-safety requirements.

Impaired Operation & Workplace Safety

- Maintain and enhance laws prohibiting driving and operating heavy machinery while impaired.
- Promote workplace testing policies that respect privacy and are solely focused on demonstrable impairment during working hours, not mere detection of past use.

Taxation & Pricing

- Tax structure must strategically balance public revenue generation, product safety compliance, and competitiveness with illicit markets: a combination of excise taxes (per weight or per THC-mg) and proportional sales taxes is recommended.
- **Earmarking:** A defined portion of cannabis tax revenues shall be earmarked for public health initiatives, substance-use education, community reinvestment, and restorative justice/reparations programs.

Law Enforcement & Penalties

- Administrative/civil penalties shall apply for minor regulatory infractions.
- Criminal penalties shall be strictly reserved for trafficking to minors, large-scale cross-border smuggling, violent crime, and industrial-scale illicit operations circumventing the regulated framework.

Licensing Equity Measures

- Priority or reserved licensing shall be established for individuals from communities disproportionately harmed by prohibition, small-scale producers, cooperatives, and Indigenous producers.
- Provide low-cost licensing streams, fee waivers, and technical assistance programs to support social equity applicants.

V. Commerce, Trade and International Coordination

Domestic Commerce — Regulated markets shall effectively displace illicit supply by ensuring product availability, quality assurance, reasonable pricing, and rigorous enforcement against unlicensed sellers.

Inter-Jurisdictional Trade — Jurisdictions shall encourage harmonization of testing standards, labeling, and packaging for safe cross-border commerce where permitted by sovereign law. Strict controls and customs procedures shall be imposed to prevent unlawful cross-border diversion.

International Law — Nations shall pursue urgent and meaningful dialogues to reconcile domestic legalization with existing international drug control treaties, seeking treaty reform or interpretive agreements that explicitly permit regulated legal markets while maintaining robust public health protections.

Export & Import — Subject to domestic licensing and international agreements; commerce shall prioritize sustainable environmental practices and benefit-sharing with source communities.

VI. Public Health, Education & Research

Public Education — Fund and sustain ongoing evidence-based public education campaigns on safer use practices, risks to adolescents and pregnant persons, drug interactions, and signs of problematic use.

Prevention & Treatment — Invest cannabis tax revenues into proactive prevention programs and accessible, affordable, and stigma-free treatment services for substance use disorders.

Surveillance & Data — Establish robust, independent systems to monitor usage patterns, hospitalizations, impaired-driving incidents, legal market size, tainted-product incidents, and socioeconomic impacts.

Research Facilitation — Remove unnecessary legal and bureaucratic barriers to clinical and public-health research; create dedicated, secure funding streams for independent studies on therapeutic, social, and long-term societal effects.

VII. Restorative Justice & Social Equity

Mandatory Automatic Record Relief — Implement streamlined, automatic procedures to expunge, seal, or otherwise relieve prior convictions for cannabis offenses that would not be criminal under the new regulatory regime.

Reinvestment — A defined and legally mandated portion of cannabis excise tax revenue shall be directed to affected communities for education, job training, small-business grants, and community development.

Priority Licensing & Technical Assistance — Fast-track applications, reduced fees, mentorship programs, and business support shall be provided specifically for applicants from communities demonstrably harmed by prohibition.

Employment Transition Programs — Support former workers of the illicit market to transition into the legal industry through training, certification, and funding programs.

VIII. Environment & Sustainable Cultivation

Environmental Standards — Require strict water-use limits, mandated integrated pest management practices (IPM), incentives for renewable energy adoption, proper waste disposal for solvents and biomass, and severe penalties for illegal diversion into protected areas.

Land Stewardship — Protect Indigenous lands and ecologically sensitive areas from cultivation expansion; require permits and comprehensive environmental impact assessments for all large-scale cultivation operations.

Circular Economy — Encourage and incentivize the reuse/recycling of packaging materials and the use of sustainable cultivation inputs.

IX. Implementation & Transition (Model Roadmap)

Phase 1 — Immediate Measures (0–6 months)

1. Decriminalize personal possession and non-commercial use.
2. Establish and commence automatic expungement/record relief procedures for eligible prior convictions.
3. Launch national/regional public health and safety education campaigns.

Phase 2 — Regulatory Design (6–18 months)

1. Draft and adopt specific licensing categories, rigorous testing standards, and detailed labeling rules.
2. Create and staff the necessary administrative body or agency to oversee cannabis regulation and enforcement.
3. Design the taxation structure and finalize revenue allocation plans, including the Restorative Justice Fund.

Phase 3 — Market Opening (18–36 months)

1. Issue initial licenses, prioritizing equity applicants and small-scale producers.
2. Open the regulated retail market with immediate, targeted enforcement against large-scale unlicensed sellers.
3. Begin export/import pilot programs only after robust domestic control systems and international compliance measures are fully operational.

Phase 4 — Evaluation & Adjustment (Ongoing)

1. Monitor all outcomes based on established metrics (Section XIII).
2. Publish transparency reports annually.
3. Adjust rules and regulations proactively to address emerging public health concerns or failures in market integrity.

X. Monitoring, Compliance & Accountability

Independent Oversight — Establish an independent oversight body tasked with auditing regulators, monitoring industry compliance, and publishing annual public reports on the success of equity and public health goals.

Public Reporting — Mandate transparent disclosure of aggregate market data,

adverse-event reports, tax revenue allocations, and verifiable outcomes of equity programs.
Sanctions — Apply graduated administrative and criminal sanctions for violations, including significant fines for regulatory infractions, immediate license suspension for intentional contamination or sales to minors, and criminal prosecution for large-scale fraud or cross-border smuggling.

XI. Amendment, Ratification & Non-Binding Nature

This Declaration is aspirational and intended as a model framework for jurisdictions to adopt, adapt, and implement in line with local legal systems, cultural norms, and specific public-health priorities.

Jurisdictions and institutions are encouraged to ratify or endorse the Declaration formally or incorporate its principles into domestic law and policy.

Mechanisms for amendment shall be developed by any adopting body to ensure the framework remains responsive to evolving scientific evidence and societal values.

XII. Model Short Articles (for easy copy/paste into legislation or municipal ordinances)

Article A — Legal Adult Use

Adults aged [21] and over shall have the right to possess up to [X grams] of cannabis flower, [Y grams] of concentrate, or the equivalent in commercially sold products for personal use. Retail sales must be conducted exclusively by licensed retailers.

Article B — Licensing

No person or entity shall cultivate, process, test, transport, import, export, or sell cannabis except under a license issued in strict accordance with this Act. Licensing categories include: cultivation, processing, testing, distribution, and retail.

Article C — Testing & Labeling

All cannabis products sold to consumers must be tested by an accredited third-party laboratory for potency and contaminants. Products must carry a label showing cannabinoid content per serving and per package, batch number, and mandatory health warnings.

Article D — Youth Protections

Advertising and packaging that targets persons under [21] is strictly prohibited. Sales to minors will result in immediate license suspension and civil penalties; repeat or willful violations shall trigger criminal prosecution.

Article E — Restorative Funds

[Percentage] of all cannabis excise tax revenue shall be automatically allocated to a Community Reinvestment and Restorative Justice Fund to support expungement, business development, housing, and education in communities disproportionately affected by cannabis prohibition.

Note: Jurisdictions may set different minimum ages consistent with local constitutional norms and international obligations.

XIII. Suggested Metrics to Monitor (Minimum)

1. Rates of youth cannabis use and perceptions of risk/harm (tracked by age bracket).
2. Cannabis-related hospital and emergency department visits (including poisonings, psychosis, and trauma).
3. Impaired-driving incidents where cannabis is detected, adjusted for changes in policing and testing rates.
4. Size and share of legal vs. illicit market (measured by revenue and volume).
5. Number of convictions expunged/records sealed, broken down by demographic.
6. Number and share of licenses granted to social equity/priority applicants.
7. Environmental impact indicators (water use per kg produced, energy consumption per sq ft, pesticide violation rates).

XIV. Closing Statement (Call to Action)

Legalization without robust, equity-focused regulation risks repeating past harms in new forms; prohibition without a transition continues to punish and marginalize communities. This Declaration proposes a pragmatic, public-health-centered, equity-driven, and environmentally responsible framework for bringing cannabis out of illegality and into transparent regulation. Governments at every level—municipal, provincial/state, national, and international—**shall** use these principles and model texts to craft laws that protect citizens, repair past injustices, promote scientific research, and build safe, transparent markets founded on responsibility and inclusion.

Signed,
Queen Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry
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