

CITY OF WORCESTER

RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO STATEWIDE BALLOT QUESTION 8

WHEREAS: Massachusetts voters approved the legalization and regulation of adult-use marijuana in 2016, creating a controlled marketplace subject to licensing, product testing, public-health standards, age restrictions, security requirements, and local oversight; and

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WHEREAS: Question 8 on the November 3, 2026 statewide ballot would prohibit the retail sale of adult-use marijuana and dismantle much of the regulated industry that Massachusetts communities, businesses, employees, and consumers have relied upon for nearly a decade; and

WHEREAS: The regulated cannabis industry has become an established part of the Commonwealth's economy, generating more than \$1.6 billion in annual sales and supporting thousands of jobs in retail, cultivation, manufacturing, transportation, security, construction, professional services, and other related industries; and

WHEREAS: The jobs in this industry are held by Massachusetts residents who support their families, contribute to their communities, and participate in a legal industry created and regulated by the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS: Passage of Question 8 would place these jobs at immediate risk, force the closure of lawful businesses, disrupt contracts with local vendors, and eliminate investments made in good faith under state and municipal licensing systems; and

WHEREAS: Many cannabis establishments are locally owned small businesses, including businesses operated by women, veterans, people of color, and individuals from communities that were disproportionately affected by the enforcement of previous marijuana laws; and

WHEREAS: Eliminating legal adult-use sales would undermine the Commonwealth's commitments to economic empowerment and social equity by placing many of these entrepreneurs, employees, and their families at significant financial risk; and

WHEREAS: Regulated adult-use marijuana sales generate state and local tax revenue that supports education, public safety, infrastructure, transportation, substance-use prevention and treatment, workforce development, and other essential public services; and

WHEREAS: Worcester and other host communities receive local revenue from licensed marijuana establishments while retaining the authority to establish zoning, licensing, operating, security, and community-impact requirements; and

WHEREAS: Question 8 would eliminate this economic activity and public revenue without eliminating the demand for marijuana, likely shifting sales away from licensed and inspected businesses and back toward an illegal market that does not test its products, verify customer age, pay taxes, create protected jobs, or answer to municipal oversight; and

WHEREAS: Opposition to Question 8 is not an endorsement of marijuana use, but rather a recognition that a legal, carefully regulated, and accountable marketplace is preferable to an illegal and unregulated one; and WHEREAS, Massachusetts should continue improving its cannabis laws, strengthening public-health safeguards, supporting prevention and education, enforcing responsible business practices, and addressing legitimate community concerns without eliminating an entire legal industry and the jobs it provides;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the City Council of the City of Worcester does hereby go on record in opposition to Statewide Ballot Question 8 and urges the residents of Worcester and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to vote NO on Question 8 on November 3, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the City Council of the City of Worcester does hereby support protecting Worcester's workforce, locally owned businesses, municipal revenue, consumer safeguards, and the Commonwealth's continued commitment to a responsible and well-regulated adult-use cannabis marketplace.

Introduced in City Council by Mayor Joseph M. Petty