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**Vermont Physicians Applaud the Legislature For Maintaining
THC Potency Caps for Retail Cannabis Market**

MONTPELIER – May 18, 2022 – Physicians from the Vermont Medical Society (VMS), the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter (AAPVT), the Vermont Psychiatric Association (VPA) and the Vermont Academy of Family Physicians (VTAFP) applaud the Vermont legislature for maintaining the current statutory THC potency limits for the retail sale of cannabis flower and solid concentrated cannabis products as an important factor in protecting public health.

Our organizations thank in particular the Vermont House leadership and the House Government Operations Committee for negotiating a compromise with the Senate that kept a 60% THC cap on solid concentrates and a 30% THC cap on cannabis flower that was a cornerstone of health protection included by the House in the legislation creating the market in 2020. Many Vermonters associate legalized cannabis sales with marijuana from the 1990s, when THC levels were on average less than 4%. Yet, in states with established legal markets, like Colorado and Washington, THC potency has dramatically increased, with averages for marijuana flower ranging from 17-28% and for concentrates as high as 90% THC.

Evidence shows the risks of physical dependence and addiction increase with exposure to high concentrations of THC, and use of products with potency greater than 15% THC are more likely to produce anxiety, agitation, paranoia, suicidality, psychosis and uncontrollable vomiting.

Jessa Barnard, Executive Director of the Vermont Medical Society, says the potency caps allow Vermont to learn from other state's experiences and do better: "Colorado is currently imposing new regulations on cannabis concentrates after consumption of the high potency products have led to severe mental health and physical health impacts in their state. Colorado is also in the midst of a comprehensive study looking at the brain and health consequences of high potency concentrates, particularly on the association of increased suicidality. Vermont has the opportunity to benefit from this information and to build a more protective cannabis market. Just like we have done with sales of cannabis for symptom relief, we can do this the Vermont way - better and more safely than other states."

At a time when Vermonters are facing filled hospital beds, crowded emergency departments and prolonged wait times for in-patient mental health treatment, Vermont's medical professionals believe Vermonters deserve evidence-based information about the risks of the use of high-risk, high-potency products.

Vermonters already have a very low perception of harm from the use of cannabis. According to the Vermont Department of Health, cannabis use by Vermonters is among the highest in the country and is the highest for 18–25-year-olds, with 38% regularly using cannabis, and for 12–17-year-olds, with 27%. With vaping as a way to use cannabis increasing from 2-17% in teens, Vermont’s regulation of solid concentrates and oil-based cannabis products is particularly crucial to long-term health.

Jill Rinehart M.D., Immediate Past President of the AAPVT and current member of Vermont’s Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council, emphasized the importance of starting Vermont’s commercial cannabis market with potency caps in place particularly because of what is known of high potency cannabis use and the developing brain, “While the legal products are not supposed to be available or sold to youth, we know that they are already accessing them, and that youth are particularly vulnerable to marketing and the influence of community norms around cannabis legalization. When youth believe the risk of harm from a substance is less, their use of that substance increases.”

VMS, AAPVT VPA and VTAFP applaud the Vermont General Assembly for their actions to better protect Vermonters public health by maintaining the current statutory THC potency limits for the retail sale of cannabis flower and solid concentrated cannabis products.

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The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to optimizing the health of all Vermonters and the health care environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit www.VTMD.org

The American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of the state’s infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. AAPVT works to achieve these goals by using the collective voice of Vermont’s pediatricians to improve the lives of Vermont’s youth through public education, research, child advocacy and policy development. www.aapvt.org

The Vermont Academy of Family Physicians is committed to advocating on behalf of the state’s family physicians and promoting health among Vermonters, striving to protect the importance of the physician/patient relationship within the health care system, promote a positive practice environment and assist in the development of a unified voice on public policy issues that affect the health of Vermonters. Part of their

mission is dedicated to providing responsible advocacy for, and education of, patients and of the public in all health-related matters.

The Vermont Psychiatric Association is the state's largest organization of psychiatrists. Its approximate 120 members specialize in the treatment of mental health disorders and are committed to advancing the practice of psychiatric care in the state. The VPA accomplishes this by advocating on behalf of patients with mental health conditions, their families and care providers, promoting professionalism through continuing medical education, research and collegiality, and by representing the interests of psychiatrists and their patients before numerous legislative and regulatory bodies.