



2025 Market Outlook Working Group –Youth Champion Subcommittee Recommendations

Relevant Statute:

These recommendations are grounded in the statutory mandates that established the Social Equity Council (SEC) and govern youth-related cannabis issues. Our work directly addresses the broader charge in Public Act 24-166, Section 43, to explore and develop recommendations on engaging leaders of youth-serving organizations and any other matter the working group deems relevant.

Common Themes Addressed by Subcommittee Members:

Based on the synthesis of all working sessions, three major, intersecting themes emerged that must inform policy and funding decisions:

1. Addressing Root Causes and Economic Opportunity (**PA 24-166 Sec. 43**): Youth cannabis use is often a symptom of trauma, stress, and economic necessity. Interventions must provide trauma-informed support and genuine economic alternatives (workforce development, stipends) to counteract involvement in the illicit market.
2. Empowering Authentic, Culturally Competent Messengers (**PA 24-166 Sec. 43**): Effective education cannot use "scare tactics." Content must be scientifically based, honest, and delivered by trained peer leaders or trusted adults who "look like them," prioritizing funding for effective grassroots CBOs in DIAs.
3. Protecting the Youth Environment & Systemic Accountability (**CGS Sec. 21a-422b/d/e**): External pressures from illegal smoke shop activity and ineffective school discipline policies are directly harming youth. Policy must focus on targeted enforcement and the collection of clear school and health data to enforce existing statutes and improve youth outcomes.

Recommendations based on Common Themes and Relevant Statute:

The Youth Champions Subcommittee recommends a phased approach to funding and policy for the initial 24-month period, prioritizing flexibility, learning, and systemic accountability.

A. Phase I Policy Recommendation: Equitable Funding & Partnership Framework (PA 24-166 Sec. 43)

Action: Establish a tiered funding structure to ensure resources reach effective, grassroots organizations, mandating:

1. Peer Leadership Model: A portion of funding must support and train stipend-receiving peer mentors/educators (ages 14-25) who deliver science-based, non-judgmental cannabis education.
2. Collaborative Grant Requirement: Require larger CBOs to form a formal cohort with smaller, underrepresented grassroots organizations to ensure resources and capacity are shared equitably across the state.
3. Essential Partner Criteria: Organizations must commit to a scientifically validated "best practices" model and demonstrate a track record of serving a sizeable number of youth in DIAs (*Disproportionately Impacted Areas*).

1-Year KPI:

- 75% of funded CBOs must report implementing the peer-leader model.
- 50% of funded resources are allocated to organizations with revenue under or those partnering directly with them.

B. Phase I Policy Recommendation: Public Health & Intervention (PA 24-166 Sec. 43 & Sec. 21a-422a)

Action: Dedicate funding to directly address the economic and mental health drivers of cannabis use:

1. Culturally Competent Mental Health: Fund additional mental health clinicians, specifically people of color, embedded in youth-serving organizations to provide accessible, trauma-informed support (directly mitigating issues referenced in Sec. 21a-422a regarding denial of care).
2. Workforce Development Bridge: Leverage the cannabis industry's need for labor by funding programs that create a direct pipeline for young adults into legal cannabis jobs, coupled with responsible use education and financial literacy.
3. Parent/Guardian Education: Develop targeted educational content to engage parents, shifting the conversation to focus on brain development science and the risks of long-term use.

1-Year KPI:

- 25% increase in the number of funded full-time, culturally competent mental health providers in DIAs.
- Establishment of at least 3 new paid youth employment/stipend programs tied to the legal cannabis industry workforce.

C. Phase I Policy Recommendation: Regulatory & Systemic Accountability (Sec. 21a-422b, Sec. 21a-421ddd, Sec. 21a-422e)

Action: Focus policy recommendations on eliminating negative external factors and enforcing existing statutes:

1. Targeted Enforcement & Regulation: Empower municipalities with specific tools (beyond ineffective fines) to regulate and enforce against illicit vape shops in DIAs (directly supporting the intent of Sec. 21a-421ddd).
2. Systemic Data Mandate: Mandate the collection and analysis of non-punitive school discipline data (suspensions/expulsions for cannabis/vaping) and youth ER visits (enforcing Sec. 21a-422e). This data must be used to measure intervention effectiveness, not to increase punitive measures (Sec. 21a-422b).
3. Flexible Accountability Model: Require funded CBOs to report on three basic shared metrics (e.g., total youth served, age groups, number of trained peer educators) while allowing them to define two to three additional unique metrics specific to their successful model.

1-Year KPI:

- Reduction in youth expulsions/suspensions for cannabis/vaping offenses in schools partnered with funded CBOs.
- Successful implementation of the mandatory data collection system for both school and health data.

All relevant laws and regulations can be found here: [Cannabis Laws](#)

Specific Regulations for Youth Champions:

[Sec. 21a-422a. Cannabinoid metabolites in bodily fluids: Denial of medical care; actions or proceedings by the Department of Children and Families.](#)

[Sec. 21a-422b. Positive drug test of student and enrollment in educational institution.](#)

[Sec. 21a-421ccc. Possession of cannabis in dwelling unit or private property by person under twenty-one.](#)

[Sec. 21a-421ddd. Sale, delivery, or giving of cannabis to person under twenty-one by person aged twenty-three or older.](#)

[Sec. 21a-422e. Program re collection of public health information on cannabis. Report.](#)

[Public Act 24-166 Sec.43. – Referring to any other matter the working group deems relevant for the purposes of this section](#)

