



Support HB 18-1133: Marijuana Fibrous Waste Recycling

The Problem: Recyclable Marijuana Plant Waste Filling our Landfills

Current laws governing marijuana waste require that all waste – including plant material – be destroyed and thrown away, primarily into landfills. Current MED rules for waste disposal require licensed marijuana facilities to grind up all marijuana waste, including the stalks, on the premises. Many licenses have found that the only way they can grind up the stalks, which are very tough material, is to use a gasoline-powered mulcher within the licensed premise exposing employees to unnecessary risks (electric mulchers generally are not powerful enough to do the job of rendering the material unusable and unrecognizable).

The State of Colorado has one of the lowest rates of recycling in the country. According to the Colorado Association for Recycling, the rate of recycling in Colorado is only 11 percent of all solid waste – compared to a nationwide average of 34 percent. CDPHE reports a rate of 19 percent. All agree that it is well below the national average.

Industry extrapolated estimates based on sales data suggest we are throwing nearly a million pounds of waste in our landfills each day after chopping the plant waste to bits and mixing it with dirt. The proposed marijuana fibrous waste recycling bill aims to address this problem by creating a process for license holder to recycling plant waste for the purposes of making non-consumable products.

The Solution: Enhanced Supply Chain for Natural Fiber Products Market

The fibrous parts of plants of genus Cannabis (primarily the stalk, but also stems and roots) have many potential economic uses. Long fibers in stalk can be used to make textiles. Short fibers can be used to make building materials and animal bedding. The fibers also can be processed further to make a wide variety of industrial materials, from feedstock for 3D printers, pulp for making paper, and industrial-grade sugars and lignins for the manufacture of industrial products.

Cannabis fiber industries have not yet taken off in Colorado because the infrastructure (pre-processing, transportation and processing) does not yet exist. This is due to a lack of critical mass of source material, prohibitive costs and bottlenecks in production and transportation. By creating an environment that provides a recycling alternative for marijuana fibrous waste, we can create a readily available supply of Cannabis fiber for processors and help kick-start the natural industrial fiber industry in Colorado helping Industrial Hemp fiber markets flourish.

Relationship to Industrial Hemp

Under this proposal, both fibrous waste from marijuana and industrial hemp may both be processed in the same recycling facility, using the same industrial processes to manufacture the same types of industrial materials. This legislation was written and designed in conjunction with the marijuana and hemp industries with the intent of jump starting the supply chain for Industrial Hemp.

Marijuana and industrial hemp will continue to be defined and regulated separately in the State of Colorado. Under this proposal, both fibrous waste from marijuana and industrial hemp may both be processed in the same recycling facility, using the same industrial processes to manufacture the same types of industrial materials.

Diversion of Legal Marijuana

The stems and stock material that this legislative proposal addresses – fibrous waste – is almost pure cellulose. Only the green portions of the marijuana plant (flowers and leaves) contain any significant concentrations of THC, or of any other type of cannabinoid. The current legislative proposal addresses only the cellulosic fiber components of the marijuana waste stream, not the green material.

If it were technically and economically feasible to extract THC from these Cannabis stocks and stems, then license holders would be doing that and not be chopping that waste into bits and mixing it with dirt for the landfill. The industry wouldn't be generating the mountain of marijuana plant waste that it is generating now. The very fact that fibrous waste is almost pure cellulose and presently is going nowhere except into landfills only demonstrates that there is no risk of this material being diverted into the illegal marijuana markets.

Q: Does this bill address Hot Hemp?

A: No. Hot hemp does not meet the definition of Fibrous Waste, nor is it legal industrial hemp. Hot hemp is not a legal crop under Colorado law. It cannot legally be delivered to an industrial fiber recycling facility. Nothing in this legislative proposal legalizes or otherwise changes the present illegal status of hot hemp.

Hot hemp already is subject to strict rules by the Colorado Department of Agriculture, which requires that such material be either destroyed or else put to an alternative use on the registered land area (the grow site) approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture. Hot hemp and anything made from hot hemp may not be sold or transported off of the registered land area.

HB18-1133 Supporting Organizations:

Hoban Law Group

Vicente Sederberg LLC

Colorado Industrial Hemp Roundtable

Colorado Hemp Industries Association

National Hemp Industries Association

Colorado Industrial Hemp Research Foundation

Loveland Hemp Company

Canna Cycle

9 Fiber

Pure Vision Technologies

Green Cherry Organics

Tiny Hemp Houses

Colorado Hemp Company

Frieda Farms

Chimney Rock Farms

Sandy Head Farms