Coalition runs full-page New York Times ad to dispute pro-marijuana editorial
By Niraj Chokshi August 2

A coalition of groups is running a full-page advertisement in the New York Times this weekend, advocating against the maturing movement to legalize marijuana.
The ad comes in response to a New York Times editorial series launched last weekend arguing for an end to marijuana prohibition. In it, the newspaper’s editorial board advocated for an end to the federal ban on the drug. The ad, pictured below, features a businessman with the pasted-on head of a hippie, a visual metaphor for what the groups warn is the disconnected perception and reality when it comes to legalization.

“The legalization of marijuana means ushering in an entirely new group of corporations whose primary source of revenue is a highly habit-forming product,” the ad reads. “Sounds a lot like another industry we just put in its place. Many facts are being ignored by this and other news organizations. Go to GrassIsNotGreener.com to see why so many major medical associations oppose marijuana legalization.”

The website, which contains resources about the dangers of marijuana, is affiliated with Project SAM, which stands for Smart Approaches to Marijuana. The nonprofit was co-founded by former congressman and former head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Patrick Kennedy and former Obama administration drug policy adviser professor Kevin Sabet. It advocates against legalization, but in favor of dropping mandatory minimum sentences and removing criminal penalties while expunging records for low-level users of the drug, and pushes for better access to treatment, education and prevention. The group contends that legalization risks the creation of a predatory industry.

“In the marijuana business, the values of the flower children have been quickly replaced by the values of Wall St. power brokers,” Sabet said in a statement. “We’re on the brink of creating the next Big Tobacco. We feel like this is an important message most Americans have not considered.”

The implementation of legalization by Colorado officials–some of them at least initially opposed to it–has been described as a success, though it’s too early to assess the public health impact of the law itself. In Washington, the only other state to also legalize pot, the drug went on sale this month. Legalization is on the November ballot in Oregon and Alaska.

The coalition behind the new website includes:

- The American Society of Addiction Medicine, a group that boasts more than 3,000 addiction physician and professional members

- The National Association of Drug Court Professionals, a nonprofit whose members include judges, attorneys and clinical specialists
• National Families in Action, a group dedicated to getting state laws passed to prevent marketing of drugs and drug use to children.

Parents Opposed to Pot.