



October Newsletter

California Legislature Approves Repeal of Mandatory Minimum Law

The California legislature has voted to approve SB 73, legislation to end mandatory jail sentences for certain drug offenses. This would amend sentencing mandates established during the height of the 1980s drug war era. The bill would not change maximum penalties allowed, but would permit judges to impose shorter sentences, or order probation or community-based services instead of incarceration.

Currently, mandatory minimum sentencing requirements deny discretion to judges in their sentencing of people arrested on certain drug charges. For example, if a person is found guilty of possessing to sell, or if a person with a prior drug offense is convicted of drug possession for personal use, a judge must impose a mandatory minimum sentence. SB 73 would eliminate this requirement.

The bill is authored by Senator Wiener (D-San Francisco) and Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo (D-Los Angeles) and is supported by a wide coalition of state and national organizations including DPA, Families Against Mandatory Minimums, California Public Defenders Association, as well as drug treatment professionals.

"We are grateful to Senator Wiener and Assembly Member Carrillo for leading the fight for greater justice in the state legislature," said [Jeannette Zanipatin](#), director of DPA's California office. "Nationally, there is a bipartisan consensus that mandatory minimums are unjust, ineffective, and fiscally irresponsible. We are heartened that California law might finally catch up with that reality."

The bill now heads to Governor Gavin Newsom, who has until October 10th to act on the bill.

[Learn more](#)

Chris Alexander, Former DPA Staffer, to Lead New York's Office of Cannabis Management

In early September, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced the nomination of Chris Alexander for executive director of the state's Office of Cannabis Management, and former Assembly Member Tremaine Wright for chair of the Cannabis Control Commission.

Alexander is a former policy staffer at DPA and was deeply involved in crafting the architecture of the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA), which legalized marijuana in New York, to ensure it centered racial and economic justice. Alexander and Wright have now been confirmed to their new roles by the New York Senate.

The MRTA was passed by New York's legislature in March, before being signed into law by then-Governor Cuomo. It sets a new national standard for marijuana legalization with significant community reinvestment, social equity, and racial and economic justice provisions. This hard-fought victory came after years of advocacy spearheaded by DPA and our [StartSMARTNY campaign](#).

[Kassandra Frederique](#), DPA's executive director, applauded the appointments of Alexander and Wright, stating that they both "understand the deep harm that criminalization has caused to individuals and communities – especially communities of color – across the state. Their past work has reflected a commitment to working with people who have been directly impacted by prohibition and demonstrated a belief in evidence-based policies that center equity and justice."

"We look forward to the next steps of fully establishing the Office of Cannabis Management and rapidly working to implement New York's adult-use program to fulfill its promise of being a national model for legalization with equity, reinvestment, and justice at its core."

[Learn more.](#)

Take Action: Support the MORE Act

This past week, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act was passed by the House Judiciary Committee, the first vote since the

bill was reintroduced in May.

Now it's time to build even more support and encourage the House to pass it this year. [Tell your Representative to advance marijuana justice by passing the MORE Act immediately.](#)

The MORE Act would end the federal war on marijuana and repair the harms of prohibition, which has disproportionately harmed Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low-income communities.

Federal reform is needed now more than ever. Together, let's fight for marijuana justice across the country.

[Take action now.](#)

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

[FEATURED POST: CRIMINALIZING FENTANYL DOESN'T SAVE LIVES](#)



You can't arrest fentanyl away. More criminalization won't save lives. We need a health-based approach. [Watch our video on Facebook that explores](#)

how fentanyl criminalization does more harm than good.

Visit DPA's Facebook page.

DPA's Podcast, *Drugs & Stuff*: Maia Szalavitz Considers Harm Reduction's Past and Future

The harm reduction movement began as a reaction against drug war policies that criminalize, punish, and hurt people – and a need to save lives. As a public health approach that aims to reduce the harms related to drug use and minimize risk, it offers a fresh and compassionate alternative to the war on drugs.

New York Times bestselling author [Maia Szalavitz](#) has chronicled the fascinating and impactful history of this movement in her new book, *Undoing Drugs: The Untold Story of Harm Reduction and the Future of Addiction*.

In the latest episode of DPA's podcast, *Drugs & Stuff*, DPA's [Sheila Vakharia](#) sat down with Maia to talk about her research, her book's timeliness, and where the movement can go from here, including the decriminalization and legal regulation of drugs.

[Listen now on our website](#) or on your favorite podcast streaming platforms. The podcast's [full back catalog can be found here](#).

DPA Is Hiring: Director of Digital Communications and Strategy, and Senior Accountant

DPA has **two new job openings**: Director of Digital Communications and Strategy, and Senior Accountant. These positions will help strengthen the organization, and the drug policy reform movement, at this crucial time.

The Director of Digital Communications and Strategy will work closely with the communications team, as well as DPA's development and policy teams. This person will create and implement a digital marketing and communications strategy for the organization, and ensure a cohesive, high-

impact, and consistent marketing approach. [Find out more about this position here.](#)

The Senior Accountant will work within the finance and administration team, reporting to the director of finance and accounting. This person must be an accounting professional with strong knowledge and experience in accounting practices, fiscal control standards, and basic financial operations for not-for-profit organizations. [Find out more about this position here.](#)

DPA is an equal opportunity employer. We value a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, gender, ethnicity, personal appearance, political affiliation, family responsibility, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability, veteran status, and record of arrest or conviction. We are particularly interested in hiring people who have been adversely affected by the war on drugs.

New PBS Documentary, *The Cannabis Question*, Features *Kassandra Frederique*

[Kassandra Frederique](#), DPA's executive director, appears in NOVA's latest documentary, [the Cannabis Question](#), on PBS. Kassandra discusses the history of marijuana prohibition and how it has disproportionately harmed communities of color.

The documentary has already been selected by PBS to be featured during their portion of the Summer 2021 Television Critics Association (TCA) Press Tour.

Kassandra will join a live Q&A and panel, along with others who appear in the film, on October 7. [Register for the event here.](#)

[Watch the documentary here.](#)

Drug Policy in the News

Vice: Drug Users Are Being Sentenced to Forced Rehab. But Does It Work?

Huffington Post: White House Walks Political Tightrope With Plan To

Criminalize Fentanyl

Self: Michael K. Williams's Death Sheds Light on the Overdose Crisis During the Pandemic

CBS New York: Lawmakers On Long Island Begin Pushing 'Death By Dealer' Bill

Nevada Public Radio: Fentanyl, Cops And Courts: How We're Addressing The Growing Overdose Crisis

Washington Post: Injection Sites Could Save Lives And Reduce Drug Use

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