

March 28, 2022

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515



House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Vote YES on the MORE Act (H.R. 3617)

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Honorable Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

We write today to urge you to vote YES on the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act of 2021 (H.R. 3617) when it comes to the House floor this week. The Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) is a national organization that advocates for drug policies that are grounded in science, compassion, health, and human rights, with a core mission to reduce the harms associated with drug use and punitive drug laws. The MORE Act addresses the collateral consequences of federal marijuana criminalization and takes steps to ensure the legal marketplace is diverse and inclusive.

In the 116th Congress in December 2020, the House of Representatives passed the MORE Act by a vote of 228-164. This marked the first time since marijuana was added to the Controlled Substances Act, which unambiguously criminalized it at the federal level, that a chamber of Congress passed a bill to end federal marijuana prohibition. The month marks the 50th anniversary of the President Nixon-appointed Shaffer Commission, which called for the decriminalization of marijuana. Millions of Americans have been arrested for marijuana since the Shaffer Commission issued its report, and while arrest rates have fallen in the past decade, approximately 500,000 individuals in the United States were arrested for marijuana since the original passage of the MORE Act in 2020. Ending the federal criminalization of marijuana could not happen a moment too soon.

The MORE Act would declassify marijuana as a controlled substance under federal law, expunge marijuana convictions and reduce marijuana sentences. It would place an initial five percent¹ federal excise tax on marijuana sales at the manufacturer level in order to fund programming and services in communities adversely impacted by drug prohibition and to promote a diverse and inclusive marketplace. The measure would also end collateral consequences, ensuring that people will no longer lose federal benefits or their immigration status due to marijuana use. The provisions found in the MORE Act are common sense solutions to many of the problems plaguing our country right now. In fact, a recent Pew Research poll shows that a record number of U.S. adults—91%—now support marijuana legalization for medical or adult use, a policy that is only achievable by removing the substance from the Controlled Substances Act as the MORE Act does.²

Traditionally, marijuana was legalized at the state level solely through ballot measures, with lawmakers waiting to take their cue from the public. However, since the MORE Act was first passed in the House, state legislatures in Connecticut, New Mexico, New York, and Virginia all passed laws to end the criminalization of marijuana and establish systems to tax and regulate production and sales for adults 21 and over. Notably, each

¹ This tax rate will graduate to 8% over five years.

² Pew Research Center, “Americans Overwhelmingly Say Marijuana Should be Legal for Recreational or Medical Use,” April 16, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/16/americans-overwhelmingly-say-marijuana-should-be-legal-for-recreational-or-medical-use/>.

of the states adopted expungement and social equity features similar to those contained in the MORE Act. This demonstrates that the issue of marijuana decriminalization and the other components found in the MORE Act are mainstream policies that enjoy strong popular support. The MORE Act seeks to end the federal criminalization of marijuana and align the public's view with federal law, while allowing individual states to decide the course they want to take on marijuana.

The time to end federal marijuana prohibition is long overdue. **We hope that you will be part of making history and vote in favor of the MORE Act.** For more information about anything contained in this letter, please contact me at mperez@drugpolicy.org.

Sincerely,

Maritza Perez
Director, National Affairs
Drug Policy Alliance