

November 2nd, 2023

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are writing to express our gratitude for your willingness to acknowledge the failure of marijuana prohibition and your commitment to decriminalize the substance.

As leading coalitions working closely with both sides of the aisle in Congress to find a legislative solution, the Marijuana Justice Coalition and the Cannabis Freedom Alliance represent a diverse range of non-profit and public interest groups. We are writing with a unified voice to emphasize that only by descheduling marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) can you fulfill your promise to the American people regarding cannabis decriminalization.

According to the most recent FBI data, nearly 250,000 individuals were arrested for marijuana-related charges nationwide in 2021. People arrested for marijuana often face severe penalties, including months of prison or jail time and thousands of dollars in fines. Incarceration or an arrest creates barriers to securing gainful employment, education, and housing opportunities. While people of all races tend to use marijuana at the same rate, Black individuals are arrested three times more often than their white counterparts for the same offense.

Currently, the cannabis marketplace is regulated by 48 states through various regulatory systems. In our federal system, these laboratories of democracy should not be impeded in their development of effective measures to ensure public safety and promote public health. Any action to move marijuana to another CSA schedule rather than removing it would simply maintain federal criminalization of these programs, licensed companies, and individuals operating in a fully legal manner under existing state rules and regulations. Further, this mere change of scheduling classification as opposed to descheduling would not alleviate existing distrust in law enforcement around cannabis given the supermajority public support for ending criminalization.

For those reasons and more, we sincerely request that you oppose merely rescheduling cannabis under the CSA and instead urge you to deschedule the substance entirely, allowing state-based regulatory programs to function as intended without unnecessary federal interference. We further urge you to use your influence to encourage Congress to pass comprehensive marijuana descheduling legislation that includes a well-thought-out plan for reasonable federal regulation and for implementing interstate commerce that protects public health and the ability for small businesses to thrive in the emerging legal marketplace.

Now is the time to end federal marijuana criminalization, Mr. President, not to rebrand it.

Sincerely,
The Marijuana Justice Coalition and Cannabis Freedom Alliance

