

November 18, 2024

RE: Cosponsor the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA)

Dear Honorable Members of the U.S. Senate,

With the recent development that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) may issue a proposed rule to reschedule marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), it has become more important than ever for Congress to advance comprehensive legislation to remove (“deschedule”) marijuana from the CSA. Rescheduling marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III of CSA will maintain the criminal penalties and collateral consequences that are in effect today. To fully address the conflict between state and federal marijuana laws, descheduling must take place. **We, the undersigned 100 organizations, urge you to cosponsor the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA), the most comprehensive descheduling legislation in Congress.**

The CAO A decriminalizes marijuana by descheduling it from the CSA and provides a regulatory framework for marijuana to protect health and safety. In addition, the legislation does the following:

- Resentences and automatically expunges federal marijuana convictions;
- Disallows discrimination in the provision of federal benefits against people who use marijuana;
- Protects noncitizens from immigration consequences based on marijuana activity;
- Provides workplace safety standards for workers in the industry;
- Facilitates marijuana research;
- Establishes a program to help eradicate barriers to marijuana business licensing and employment for people directly impacted by the war on drugs; and
- Reinvests in communities that have been disproportionately targeted by marijuana criminalization.

Notably, the CAO A would accomplish President Biden’s pledges to decriminalize marijuana and automatically expunge marijuana convictions. Under marijuana *rescheduling*, hundreds of thousands of people will continue to be arrested in the United States for marijuana, including for simple possession. Despite similar rates of use, Black and brown people are arrested nearly four times as often as their white counterparts for marijuana conduct. Federal legislation to *deschedule* marijuana would end federal marijuana arrests and send a strong message to states that have not already decriminalized it themselves to do so. While President Biden has pardoned federal simple marijuana possession charges for many people, pardons do not restore civil

rights to the extent expungements do. The CAO A would substantially fulfill both of these goals of President Biden.

As we work to gather cosponsors, we encourage the Senate to continue to solicit input on this legislation, including by holding hearings and briefings on the issue of federal marijuana reform. We are at both a pivotal and historic moment for federal marijuana reform. **We urge you to cosponsor the CAO A to finally end the devastating effects of marijuana criminalization.**

For any questions about this letter, please contact Maritza Perez Medina, Director of Federal Affairs at the Drug Policy Alliance, at mperez@drugpolicy.org.

Sincerely,

2nd Chance
AIDS Foundation Chicago
Alianza for Opportunity
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Berkeley Patients Group
Better Organizing to Win Legalization (BOWL)
C.A.R.E. at Arthur Street Hotel
CAN-DO Foundation
Center for American Progress
Center for Employment Opportunities
Center for Housing & Health
Center for Policing Equity
Clergy for a New Drug Policy
Color of Change
Cruel Consequences: Portraits of Misguided Law
DC Caucus for Returning Citizens
DC Justice Lab
Doctors for America
Doctors for Drug Policy Reform
Dream.org
Drug Policy Alliance
EX-incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO Of Wisconsin)

Fair and Just Prosecution
Faith in Harm Reduction
Forward Justice Action Network
Free Hearts
G.O.D.
Hip Hop Caucus
Housing Works, Inc.
Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments
Illinois Harm Reduction & Recovery Coalition
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Justice Policy Institute
Justice Roundtable
JustLeadershipUSA
JustUS Coordinating Council
Juvenile Law Center
Kentucky Behavioral Health Center
Kentucky NORML
Last Prisoner Project
Latino Action Network
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Lehigh Valley NORML
Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)
Minorities for Medical Marijuana (M4MM)
Mission Green
Missouri NORML Affiliate
Mommiactivist and Sons
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Social Workers
National Cannabis Festival
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Harm Reduction Coalition
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Homelessness Law Center
National Immigration Project
National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)
National Organization for Women

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Hampshire Youth Movement
NORML Tallahassee
Operation Restoration
OpioidSettlementTracker.com
Organized Communities Against Deportations
Patient Forward
Pittsburgh NORML
Prison Policy Initiative
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Punto Medio Restorative Services
Revolve Impact
Southern Poverty Law Center
StoptheDrugWar.org
Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP)
Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative
The Action Lab at Northeastern University School of Law
The Legal Aid Society
The National Urban League
The Porchlight Collective SAP
The Weldon Project
Truth Pharm
UFCW International Union
Up North Harm Reduction
Vera Institute of Justice
Veterans Cannabis Coalition
Vilomah Memorial Foundation
Virginia NORML
VOCAL-KY
VOCAL-NY
VOCAL-TX
VOCAL-US
VOCAL-WA
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
Young Successful Leaders