

August 1, 2019

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

House Minority Whip Steve Scalise
2049 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler
2141 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

House Judiciary Ranking Member Doug Collins
1504 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the more than 100 undersigned organizations, we write to express our support for the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act (H.R. 3884). We request that this critical criminal and racial justice legislation be swiftly marked up and immediately scheduled for floor consideration. The MORE Act will de-schedule marijuana and fund social equity programs for individuals and communities most harmed by the war on drugs.

We are encouraged by the progress around marijuana reform at the state and federal level. Today 33 states and the District of Columbia provide legal access to medical marijuana and 11 states plus the District of Columbia provide legal access to recreational marijuana.ⁱ At the federal level, Congress has introduced a number of bills that would reform the nation's marijuana laws. This Congress has held a record-number of hearings on marijuana reform, including a historic hearing on July 10, 2019 on the need to reform marijuana laws and address racial justice.ⁱⁱ Indeed, the tide has turned on marijuana reform. A 2018 Center for American Progress and GBA Strategies poll found that 68 percent of voters support marijuana legalization.ⁱⁱⁱ The poll also found that 73 percent of voters support the automatic sealing of marijuana offenses.^{iv} While this progress is promising, we insist that any marijuana reform or legalization bill considered by Congress include robust provisions addressing social justice and criminal justice reform.

The war on drugs, which includes the war on marijuana, devastated the lives of generations of African American and Latinx Americans from low-income communities.^v These individuals were disproportionately targeted and brought into the criminal justice system for engaging in marijuana activity that is increasingly lawful. A 2013 ACLU study found that Black people are nearly four times more likely than white people to be arrested for marijuana possession despite similar usage rates in both groups.^{vi} In 2018, *The New York Times* reported that black and Hispanic New Yorkers were arrested for low-level marijuana charges at eight times and five times the rate of white New Yorkers, respectively, notwithstanding similar marijuana usage rates across groups.^{vii} Criminal justice involvement deprives individuals from low-income

communities of color equal access to economic opportunity.^{viii} Incarceration robs families and communities of breadwinners and workers. Thus, any marijuana reform bill that moves forward in Congress must first address criminal justice reform and repair the damage caused by the war on drugs in low-income communities of color.

The MORE Act is the most far-reaching marijuana reform bill introduced in Congress that would address historical and current racial inequities. The MORE Act will:

- De-schedule marijuana, removing it from the Controlled Substances Act.
- Instruct the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to collect demographic data on the marijuana industry.
- Provide a process for courts to expunge marijuana convictions and re-sentence people with marijuana convictions.
- Establish that no person will be denied federal benefits on the basis of use or possession of marijuana.
- Prohibit immigration penalties based on marijuana.
- Create a Cannabis Opportunity Trust Fund from federal marijuana tax revenue that will establish (1) the Community Reinvestment Grant Program to fund community organizations providing services in communities most harmed by the war on drugs; (2) the Cannabis Opportunity Program to fund Small Business Administration loans to support socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who own marijuana businesses; and (3) the Equitable Licensing Grant Program to provide jurisdictions with funds to develop and implement equitable marijuana licensing programs targeting individuals most adversely impacted by the war on drugs.

The MORE Act's targeted programs will serve to empower historically underserved communities that bore this nation's drug war. It will also reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system and protect people from unequal marijuana enforcement. Justice requires that marijuana reform policy in Congress first de-schedule and repair past harms.

We ask Members of Congress to support the MORE Act and take this critical step to bolster communities ravaged by the war on drugs. We urge Members of Congress to swiftly mark-up this bill and send it to the floor for consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter. Please contact Maritza Perez, Senior Policy Analyst for Criminal Justice Reform at the Center for American Progress, with any questions at mperez@americanprogress.org or 202.796.9719.

Sincerely,

4Front Ventures
A New PATH
African American Ministers In Action
American Civil Liberties Union
AOUON
Blacks in Law Enforcement of America
Broken No More
Buds & Roses

California NORML
Cannabis Consumers Campaign
Center for American Progress (CAP)
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Living and Learning
Central Florida NORML
Clergy for a New Drug Policy
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Colorado NORML
Community Mediation DC
Contra Costa County NORML
Delaware NORML
Dignity & Power Now
Drug Policy Alliance
Due Process Institute
Empire State NORML
Families ACT
Family Law and Cannabis Alliance (FLCA)
FedCURE
Federal Public and Community Defenders
From Prison Cells To PhD
Generation Progress
Harm Reduction Coalition
Health Equity Alliance
Heartland Alliance
Human Rights Defense Center
Human Rights Watch
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Institute of the Black World 21st Century
Interfaith Action for Human Rights
International CURE
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Justice Roundtable
Justice Strategies
JustLeadershipUSA
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Legal Aid Society
Lehigh Valley NORML
life for pot
Maryland Marijuana Justice
Maryland NORML
Michigan NORML
Minority Cannabis Business Association
MomsRising
NAACP
National Action Network

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Employment Law Project
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Juvenile Justice Network
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nevada NORML
New York City NORML
NORML
NORML Long Island
NORML of Florida
Pittsburgh NORML
Point of Discovery
PolicyLink
Prevention Point Pittsburgh
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Protect Families First
Public Justice Center
Quad Cities Harm Reduction
Rights Restoration Project
Roanoke Valley NORML
Roc NORML
Safe Street Arts Foundation
SENSIBLE FLORIDA
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Arizona NORML
SPARC
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction, Inc.
StoptheDrugWar.org
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Takoma Wellness Center
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
Texas NORML
Texas Organizing Project
The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
The Holy Trinity Community of Ethiopia Restoration House in D.C.
The Legal Aid Society
The Ordinary People Society
The Sentencing Project
United We Dream
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
Urban Survivors Union and NC Survivors Union
VOCAL-NY

Washington NORML
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
West Ga NORML Women’s Alliance
Witness to Mass Incarceration
Women Who Never Give Up, Inc.
Women with a Vision, Inc.
Wyoming NORML
Youth Justice Coalition

ⁱ Jeremy Berke and Skye Gould, “Illinois just became the first state to legalize marijuana sales through the legislature—here are all the states where marijuana is legal,” Business Insider, June 25, 2019, available at <https://www.businessinsider.com/legal-marijuana-states-2018-1>.

ⁱⁱ Angelica LaVito, “US lawmakers look to legalize pot in ‘historic’ marijuana reform hearing,” CNBC, July 10, 2019, available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/10/us-lawmakers-look-to-legalize-pot-in-historic-marijuana-reform-hearing.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Center for American Progress, “New Polling From CAP and GBA Strategies Shows 68 percent of Voters Support Marijuana Legalization; 73 Percent Support Automatic Sealing of Marijuana Offenses,” June 20, 2018, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/release/2018/06/20/452451/release-new-polling-cap-gba-strategies-shows-68-percent-voters-support-marijuana-legalization-73-percent-support-automatic-sealing-marijuana-offenses/>.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Drug Policy Alliance, “Race and the Drug War,” available at <http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/race-and-drug-war>.

^{vi} ACLU, “Report: The War on Marijuana is Black and White,” available at <https://www.aclu.org/report/report-war-marijuana-black-and-white?redirect=criminal-law-reform/war-marijuana-black-and-white>.

^{vii} Benjamin Mueller, Robert Gebeloff, and Sahil Chinoy, “Surest Way to Face Marijuana Charges in New York: Be Black or Hispanic,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 2018, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/13/nyregion/marijuana-arrests-nyc-race.html?module=inline>.

^{viii} Maritza Perez, Olugbenga Ajilore, and Ed Chung, “Using Marijuana Revenue to Create Jobs,” Center for American Progress, May 20, 2019, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2019/05/20/470031/using-marijuana-revenue-create-jobs/>.