

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy, and Leader McConnell,

While we were disheartened by the Senate's inaction following the House of Representatives' historic vote on the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act last Congress, we are optimistic that the bill's re-introduction this Congress indicates progress for descheduling marijuana. I ask for the MORE Act, which is foundational in righting systemic injustices and removing barriers for families and individuals nationwide, to be expeditiously considered by the House and Senate.

The [MORE](#) Act ends the federal prohibition on marijuana and seeks justice for those who have been convicted within the criminal justice system on marijuana-related charges. The bill removes marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, applying retroactively to prior and pending convictions. It also requires federal courts to allow for re-sentencing to those who served time for marijuana-related charges. In conjunction with authorizing the commercial sale of marijuana, the MORE Act authorizes a 5% sales tax on marijuana and marijuana products. All revenue from this tax would go towards an Opportunity Trust Fund to support three grant programs that invest in those who have been adversely affected by the War on Drugs or who are economically disadvantaged business owners in the industry. The bill also provides non-discrimination protections for marijuana use, possession, or prior convictions.

Additionally, passing the MORE Act and descheduling marijuana is a racial justice issue. In [2018](#), almost 700,000 people were arrested on marijuana-related charges. While Black and White Americans use marijuana at similar rates, Black people are 3.64 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than White people. Unfortunately, there is not comprehensive data on the racial and/or ethnic breakdown of those arrested or charged for marijuana-related crimes, which presents a challenge to assessing the impact on Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, and Multiracial individuals. It is clear, though, that marijuana-related arrests target Black Americans and lead to excessive harm in the Black community.

Those incarcerated for marijuana-related crimes have persistent challenges in obtaining employment and are left with lasting impacts on lifetime earnings. According to a 2002 study of men convicted of federal felony marijuana charges, incarceration reduced callbacks from

potential employers by 50% and reduced the rate of wage growth by up to 30% over a person's [lifetime](#). As a result, individuals' expected lifetime earnings are estimated to go down by one fifth after incarceration. Loss of income affects the full family as a parent's earnings are an important determinant of a child's future [income](#). A marijuana-related conviction can also affect an individual's access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). While some states, including Washington, have chosen not to participate in such bans, there are far too many states using criminal [records](#) to reject federal applications for assistance. The MORE Act remedies these injustices by expunging records of marijuana charges, preventing future convictions for marijuana-related charges, and expanding access to benefits for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Furthermore, the MORE Act will also support businesses within the cannabis industry in dire need of access to safe and secure banking. Small businesses in the cannabis industry are at greater risk of robbery and other threats to their sustainability. Currently, financial institutions that knowingly accept money derived from transactions involving marijuana related sales can be penalized and prosecuted under federal law for their involvement. Descheduling marijuana at the federal level would protect financial institutions from investigations due to receiving and conducting financial transactions suspected of the use marijuana-related funds. We must consider the MORE Act to give them needed relief.

Many states have already taken important steps towards justice by decriminalizing and legalizing marijuana. Washington was one of the first states to legalize recreational use of cannabis in 2012, with the electorate overwhelmingly voting in support of legalization. Currently, seventeen states (including the District of Columbia) have legalized recreational marijuana use and an additional ten states have decriminalized marijuana. Twelve of the seventeen states with legalized recreational use approved the measure through the ballot box, with the other five addressing the issue in the state legislature. Positive views towards marijuana legalization extend beyond states that have taken action. A 2021 Pew Research Center [study](#) found that 91% of Americans believe in some form of marijuana legalization, with 60% supporting recreational legalization and 31% supporting medical use. Voters have spoken -- we need to modernize our marijuana laws.

The MORE Act removes barriers for families to seek out economic opportunity and provides tools to help those who have been harmed by the system to achieve these goals. This is the will of the American people, and it is time we act on it. As Congressman Nadler recently re-introduced the MORE Act, I urge you to bring the bill forward so that we may see timely consideration and passage of this landmark legislation to positively impact American families.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



Marie Newman
Member of Congress



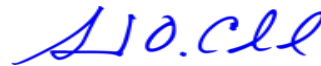
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