

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

February 10, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once famously said that the states are America's laboratories of democracy. When it comes to reforming the nation's antiquated cannabis laws, he could not have been more right.

Since 2010, 37 states have legalized medical use of cannabis and 18 states have legalized both medical and adult use. This includes a wide cross section of states governed by both Republicans and Democrats. States that are very different than ours, like Alaska, Montana, Arizona, and others have followed Colorado, Washington, and Oregon in reforming their outdated cannabis laws. Even voters in a state as conservative as South Dakota have demonstrated their support for legalization. This is an issue of individual freedom and basic fairness that clearly transcends party lines. However, one major hurdle continues to stand in the way of states' ability to make their own decisions about cannabis – the continued prohibition of marijuana at the federal level.

As more and more states move to legalize cannabis for both adult and medical use, the federal government has an important role to play. Hundreds of millions of Americans live in states that have legalized cannabis in some form while it remains illegal at the federal level. This discrepancy leads to confusion and uncertainty and raises significant questions around criminal justice reform, economic development and small business growth, and public health and safety, all of which we believe require some type of federal answer. That is why the three of us introduced a comprehensive cannabis reform framework in the form of a [discussion draft](#) of the *Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA)* last year. This bill aims to right the wrongs of the past and ensure that the federal government is matching the advancements made in states across the country.

This issue, which we believe the Senate is long overdue in addressing, has implications across many areas of American politics and policy. Following the release of the *CAOA* discussion draft, we received over 1,800 comments from a broad array of stakeholders, many with substantive and detailed policy recommendations. In the weeks ahead, we will continue the work of incorporating these comments as we aim to introduce legislation soon that is as comprehensive and as reflective of as many relevant views and voices as possible.

We write today to invite you into the drafting process as we work to finalize this legislation. In order to appropriately address such a nuanced issue, we respectfully request the input, advice and guidance of Chairs and Ranking Members of relevant committees as well as senators who have dealt with the challenges and realities of legalization in their own states. We would deeply appreciate your willingness to share your expertise on the intersections between your committees' jurisdictions, your states' experiences, and comprehensive cannabis reform and invite you to join the process of perfecting this legislation.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator