



Thursday, January 13, 2022

The Hon. Dave Joyce
U.S. House of Representatives
2065 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
U.S. House of Representatives
216 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Joyce and Ocasio-Cortez,

On behalf of the millions of activists we support at Americans for Prosperity, **we write to express support for H.R. 6129, the Harnessing Opportunities by Pursuing Expungement (HOPE) Act.** This bill is a commonsense reform that will help many Americans move out from under the shadow of their prior cannabis convictions and achieve a true second chance.

More than 79 million Americans have a criminal record.¹ More than 226,000 arrests are still made each year for the mere possession of cannabis, even though twenty-seven states have decriminalized the possession of small amounts of cannabis and many states now allow the medical or recreational use of cannabis.² People arrested, charged, or convicted of a cannabis offense will carry that record with them for the rest of their lives and it will bar them from securing the employment, housing, and education they need to advance in life.

Many state leaders have realized that imposing such unnecessary and lifelong barriers harms both public safety and local economies. Criminal record relief programs have become a promising solution in their pursuit of a better path forward. A growing body of research reveals the positive benefits of such relief for those working to restore their family, reputation, and financial future after paying their debt to society.³

This is why more than 40 states and D.C. have adopted more than 100 reforms to expand or streamline their criminal record relief programs since 2019.⁴ But many of these laws leave behind millions of Americans who are either ineligible for or unaware of such reforms.

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigations, *NGI Monthly Fact Sheets*, Federal Bureau of Investigations (November 2020), <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ngi-monthly-fact-sheet/view>.

² Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Data Explorer – Arrests Offense Counts in the United States*, U.S. Department of Justice (2021), <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/arrest>; Michael Hartman, *Cannabis Overview*, NCSL (2021), <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/marijuana-overview.aspx>; NCSL, *State Medical Marijuana Laws*, (2021), <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-medical-marijuana-laws.aspx>.

³ J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, *Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study*, 133 Harv. L. Rev. 2460 (2020); Jeffrey Selbin, et al., *Unmarked? Criminal Record Clearing and Employment Outcomes*, 108 J. Crim. L. & Criminology (2018); Amy Shlosberg, et al., *Expungement and Post-exoneration Offending*, 104 J. Crim. L. & Criminology (2014).

⁴ Margaret Love & David Schluskel, *The Reintegration Agenda During Pandemic: Criminal Record Reforms in 2020*, Collateral Consequences Resource Center (2021), https://ccresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CCRC_The-Reintegration-Agenda-During-Pandemic_2020-Reforms.pdf; Margaret Love & David Schluskel, *Pathways to Reintegration: Criminal Record Reforms in 2019*, Collateral Consequences Resource Center (2020), https://ccresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pathways-to-Reintegration_Criminal-Record-Reforms-in-2019.pdf.

The HOPE Act can help close some of these eligibility and awareness gaps by supporting the growing number of states adopting cannabis reform with their concurrent efforts to expand criminal record relief for those formerly convicted of only cannabis offenses. Allowing more individuals to have the burden of their criminal record lifted off their shoulders is both smart on crime and soft on taxpayers. We are eager to work with your offices to ensure the HOPE Act effectively achieves its intended benefits.

We look forward to working with you to advance the HOPE Act in the 117th Congress and hope that your colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join you in support of this important legislation.

Brent Wm. Gardner
Chief Government Affairs Officer
Americans for Prosperity