

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 1057**  
**TO: Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the**  
**Judiciary Committee**  
**16 February 2024**  
**National Coalition for Drug Legalization**  
**Position: Support**

The mission of the National Coalition for Drug Legalization (501(c)3) is to advance the conversation about legalization of **all** drugs through research and community service. The current drug war has had devastating effects on communities of color, the working poor, and those who suffer from medical illness in search of alternative medicine. Through meaningful and impactful research, the National Coalition for Drug Legalization can push for policies and laws that will save lives from drug overdoses and reduce incarcerations. We urge a favorable report for HB1057, a task force designed to bring key stakeholders together to recommend types of controlled dangerous substances and de minimis quantity amounts that should be eligible for a civil citation for use or possession instead of criminalization.

As the founder of the National Coalition for Drug Legalization please allow me to explain why I support HB 1057 but most importantly the legalization of all drugs. The following is an excerpt taken from our handbook and can be found on our website: [www.nationalcoalitionfordruglegalization.org](http://www.nationalcoalitionfordruglegalization.org).

As late as 2017, I supported drug prohibition. However, when my cousin Duane passed away, his death made me think about issues that affect Black men and the Black community as a whole. Duane was born drug dependent. He later went to prison over drugs and died in his struggle with alcoholism. At his funeral, I met his son Desmond for the first time. I could not believe how much Desmond resembled Duane. He had Duane's fingers, body shape, and demeanor. There was no denying that he was Duane's son. Immediately, I made a commitment to ensure that Desmond did not live the life his father led. I made Desmond an offer: He could live with me provided that he graduates from high school, go to college, and work. Desmond kept his end of the deal when he graduated from high school. This was a proud moment for me, considering that his father dropped out of high school in the 12th grade. To see Desmond in college and working part time made me very happy, but I couldn't help but think why Duane's story of drug abuse and imprisonment is so common among Black families? Why couldn't Duane see his son graduate from high school? Why couldn't Duane move beyond his substance abuse problem? The answer is drug prohibition.

Our current drug laws negatively and disproportionately affect people of color, especially Black people. The felony record Duane received from his drug sentence prohibited him from finding a decent job, applying for Pell Grants, and accessing most kinds of public assistance. I then started to think about issues related to poverty and how drug prohibition contributes to crime and drug

overdoses in poverty-stricken communities. People will resort to selling drugs when job opportunities for low-skilled, low-wage workers are virtually non-existent. People will abuse drugs under the same circumstances. Our drug supply is not safe. Prohibition has created very fertile ground for organized crime. There are no standards for purity or potency, hence the increase of fentanyl overdoses due to contamination unbeknownst to drug users. Violence is common in an illicit economy where people cannot resolve their disputes through lawsuits or arbitration.

America needs to recognize that we will not see a reduction in violent crimes until we legalize drugs. All drugs. We need to recognize that we will not see a reduction in opioid overdoses until we legalize opioids like heroin. What is presented is unconventional, but it is clear that the current approach to drug use has failed.

While HB 1057 does not legalize all drugs, it is a step in the right direction. I hope to open your heart and inspire you to support HB1057. Thank you for your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

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