



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Date: February 16, 2021

Re: HB 32 - Maryland Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to represent my own views as a subject matter expert and as a speaker for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP). LEAP is a nonprofit group of judges, prosecutors, police, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience on changes we believe can improve public safety. As a resident of Queenstown, Maryland, I would like to offer my reasons for supporting the passage of HB 32.

Having served as a judge for the District Court of Tulsa, Oklahoma, I had to decide how to best administer justice for my community as cases came across my docket. About half of those cases were related to drug possession or sales, or violent disputes over drugs. As much as I appreciated the job security, I would rather have spent my days trying cases in which the defendants were accused of serious crimes. I wish that I could look back on that time in my career and say I made my community safer.

After decades of hearing marijuana cases, I realized that each seller who gets arrested is immediately replaced by someone else. When customers are easy to find, someone new will be tempted by the easy money. Our best efforts at law enforcement have never actually prevented people who wanted to use marijuana from getting their hands on it.

We are wasting justice system resources chasing after marijuana sellers. If police didn't have to arrest the constant stream of dealers, and if the courts didn't have to deal with them, we could focus on serious crime.

Also, these convictions carry lifelong consequences. Many of us know a teenager who was tempted by the easy money and started selling marijuana. Usually, they stopped when they went to college or got a job. But if they were caught and charged with a felony, that conviction will likely prevent them from getting a degree, a job, or an apartment. The felony conviction does not stop them from continuing to sell; it gives them a big push down the wrong path.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

Other states have found a marijuana strategy that is working. The Colorado Department of Public Safety's impact report of marijuana legalization found that youth usage rates for the 2015-2016 school year were the lowest they've been since the 2007-2008 school year. The proportion of high school students having tried marijuana or having used in the last 30 days remained statistically the same between 2005 and 2017. In addition, DUI cases declined by 15% between 2014 to 2017.¹

In short, the kids are fine, the roadways haven't descended into drug-induced chaos, and the police are doing a better job of staying focused on what people really want.

I'm a resident of Queen Anne's County. I take my judgeship seriously-- even though I'm retired from the bench, I still consider myself a public servant. A cornerstone of our democracy is acknowledging that we can always do better. We must change laws to fit the needs and best interests of our communities.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Judge Gordon McAllister (Ret.)
District Court of Tulsa, Oklahoma
Resident of Queenstown, Maryland
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)

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<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/publicsafety/news/colorado-division-criminal-justice-publishes-report-impacts-marijuana-legalization-colorado>