

SB0784 Criminal Law - Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis Quantity - Senator Carter - Judicial Proceedings Committee

The prosecution and misdemeanor convictions of citizens in possession of small quantities of certain controlled substances is tragic. The creation of a record and misdemeanor convictions creates irreparable harm to citizens who - like recreational users of cigarettes and alcohol - are merely doing that, using a substance recreationally.

The possession of small quantities of drugs, along with the absence of any criminal activity should not be treated as harshly as we currently do. The creation of a record as a result of convictions can lead to being denied affordable housing, jobs, government assistance, etc, leaving these convicted with much fewer choices to legally make a living.

Additionally, there is more than ample data showing that people of color are treated more harshly, both in arrests, convictions, and sentencing. As someone who has primarily lived in majority white neighborhoods where the rate of drug use is no different than in neighborhoods where primarily people of color reside, I have witnessed the disparity. There are no police stationed in the white neighborhoods neighborhoods I have lived in looking for drug use. While this bill does not address the disparity in policing, it would potentially result in less impact on our citizens of color, by reducing the severity of the offense, namely, from a misdemeanor to a civil offense.

This is an important step forward in treating recreational substance abuse properly and attempting to treat it, as opposed to trying to lock more and more people up.

We have to stop ruining lives over this. Please vote FAVORABLE in committee.