



**Working to Reform Marijuana Laws**

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## **Louisiana (2022): HB 775, Testimony in support of the decriminalization of cannabis paraphernalia**

My name is Jax James and I serve as the State Policy Manager for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). I would like to thank the House Committee on Administration of Criminal Justice for considering House Bill 775. NORML is supportive of legislative efforts to decriminalize cannabis-related paraphernalia.

House Bill 775 ensures that equipment solely related to the therapeutic use of cannabis is not criminalized and its possession does not carry penalties.

It is imperative that cannabis-related paraphernalia not be criminalized given its necessity in the process of combustion and inhalation, a mechanism of ingestion that is required in many cases for patients to reap the medicinal benefits of marijuana. The criminalization of marijuana paraphernalia limits consumers' options to pills and extracts such as tinctures.

Limiting these options to extracted oral formulations is not in the best interests of patients who rely on the medicinal properties of smoking cannabis. Herbal cannabis contains more than 100 distinct cannabinoids, many of which act synergistically with one another. Many scientists believe that the combined administration of all of these parts of the plant produce a synergistic effect that is necessary in order for patients to achieve maximum therapeutic benefit. As acknowledged by famed neurosurgeon Dr. Sanjay Gupta: “[A]ll these components of the cannabis plant likely exert some therapeutic effect, more than any single compound alone.” Restricting people’s access to inhaling herbal cannabis limits their exposure to these therapeutic properties, as many of these constituents are no longer present in formulations produced following the extraction of individual cannabinoids.

Furthermore, orally administered non-herbal forms of cannabis possess delayed onset and their effects are far less predictable than those of herbal cannabis. Once inhaled, cannabinoids like THC or CBD rapidly pass from the lungs to the bloodstream – resulting in the rapid onset of drug effect. By contrast, pills must be metabolized by the liver over a period of up to several hours before the patient experiences any therapeutic benefits. This delayed onset and high degree of variability of drug effect makes it extremely difficult for patients to accurately self-regulate their dosing. As a result, many patients seeking rapid





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relief of symptoms such as chronic pain, PTSD, nausea, or spasticity will not particularly benefit from cannabis-infused pills, tinctures, or edibles.

It is common sense policy to decriminalize marijuana paraphernalia given that a medical marijuana access program exists and the state has removed certain penalties from cannabis possession. NORML urges Louisiana lawmakers to thoughtfully consider and pass HB 775 to ensure that patients can lawfully consume their medicine in a manner that best benefits them.

