



Working to Reform Marijuana Laws

Missouri (2022): HJR 83, Testimony in support of constitutional amendment to legalize adult-use cannabis

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 Special Committee on Criminal Justice for considering House Joint Resolution 83. NORML is supportive of legislative efforts to give voters the opportunity to declare their position regarding important public health legislation such as cannabis policy reform, and is supportive of the establishment of a state-sanctioned, regulated cannabis market.

House Joint Resolution 83 would place a constitutional amendment to legalize the adult use, possession, and retail sale of marijuana on the ballot for voters to decide during the 2022 election. The passage of HJR 83 would finally allow voters to have their say on this important issue.

Never in modern history has there existed greater public support for repealing the nation's nearly century-long experiment with marijuana prohibition. The ongoing prohibition of marijuana financially burdens taxpayers, encroaches upon civil liberties, engenders disrespect for the law, impedes legitimate scientific research into the plant's medicinal properties, and disproportionately impacts communities of color.

It's time to stop ceding control and revenue of the marijuana market to unregulated and untaxed enterprises. A pragmatic regulatory framework that licenses production and sale of marijuana to adults—but continues to criminalize sale to minors—best reduces the risks associated with its use and commerce.

In 2018, four years after the partial decriminalization of cannabis possession in Missouri, Black residents' likelihood of arrest compared to white residents was still on the rise despite comparable rates of consumption. Reforming how citizens engage with police and restoring confidence in public institutions requires immediate cannabis policy reform action, especially for those communities which have been disproportionately impacted and marginalized by prohibition such as people of color and low-income individuals. Adult-use marijuana legalization has broad, bipartisan support and addresses existing inequities in the state of Missouri. Missourians deserve the opportunity to democratically enact long overdue change through collective action.

For these reasons, NORML urges Missouri lawmakers to thoughtfully consider and pass HJR 83 to allow the people to make their voices heard.

