



# LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

February 22, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are current and former police chiefs, sheriffs, federal and state prosecutors, and correctional officials from across the country dedicated to protecting public safety and reducing unnecessary arrests, prosecutions, and incarceration. We urge your Administration to reclassify marijuana from a schedule I to a schedule III substance under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).

Public opinion on how the federal government should treat cannabis [has dramatically shifted](#) away from historic punitive approaches to cannabis use. By the end of this year, thirty-eight states will have established a form of legalized framework — medical, adult-use, or both — with strong voter and/or legislative support. We are concerned about how the direct conflict between state and federal laws that currently exists regarding the handling of cannabis makes it difficult for law enforcement to respond effectively to pressing public safety challenges.

This conflict between federal and state laws has also allowed an unregulated cannabis market to gain footing across the United States. The unregulated market is one that cultivates, manufactures, distributes, and sells cannabis without a government-issued license, permit, or approval. It effectively operates in the dark, outside of state-imposed guardrails and oversight. Alarmingly, we have seen cases in states like [California](#) and [Oklahoma](#) where sophisticated yet unlicensed operations are tied to organized criminal enterprises. This unregulated commerce thus poses a serious risk to public safety in communities around the country, through such connections to organized crime and the absence of oversight.

We believe that reclassification under schedule III would be an important step to help both federal and state law enforcement better prioritize limited public safety resources. They can focus efforts on working together to combat the harms that arise from unregulated cannabis markets. Moreover, rescheduling would also allow legal markets to compete on a level playing field potentially leading to greater reinvestments in critical programs that can bolster public safety. Therefore, we strongly urge the Drug Enforcement Administration to follow HHS's recommendation and reclassify marijuana as a schedule III

substance under the CSA. Such a move would advance public safety and promote more efficient and effective use of law enforcement resources across the country.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Hon. Merrick Garland, Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice  
The Hon. Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
The Hon. Anne Milgram, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration