

Legislation Text

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Celebrating the removal of cannabis from Schedule I of the Federal Controlled Substances Act and recognizing the urgent need for equitably distributed cannabis sales revenue that restores and repairs communities historically targeted by the war on drugs, and calling on the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to legalize and equitably tax cannabis.

WHEREAS, The Drug Enforcement Agency has not re-scheduled a controlled substance in forty years. Cannabis was added to Schedule I in the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, as a result of a now-public strategic, racist and classist political effort by the Reagan Administration, led by Lee Atwater - adviser to President Ronald Reagan - to criminalize certain segments of society that Reagan's Republican party deemed political enemies; and

WHEREAS, That strategy worked, incarcerating thousands of individuals at the federal level and millions at the state level across the country for possessing, using or distributing cannabis. To this day, the pretext of cannabis smell is used to conduct warrantless searches; and

WHEREAS, About the same percent of every race, across all age groups, has at some point used cannabis. But despite equal use of cannabis across races, 8 out of 10 people arrested for cannabis-related offenses in the City of Philadelphia are Black or Brown - even though the City decriminalized cannabis possession less than 30 grams in 2014, and even though prosecution of cannabis-related offenses has declined dramatically since 2017; and

WHEREAS, The limited number of studies that exist seem to show legalizing cannabis can result in a modest reduction in overdose deaths in the area. At a time when the City is in the grips of an evolving overdose crisis, every life saved is critical - and legalizing cannabis could be an important part of a constellation of life-saving policies for people in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, States that have legalized cannabis have seen significant new sources of revenue. Twenty three states plus Washington, D.C. have fully legalized cannabis; an additional twenty one have partially or fully legalized medical cannabis. In 2021, Alaska, California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington - five states with legal cannabis - collectively earned \$2.78 billion in revenue from taxing marijuana sales; in 2024, states that have legalized weed have reported \$20 billion in tax revenue during the first quarter alone; and

WHEREAS, In 2022, President Joe Biden blanket-pardoned federal cannabis possession convictions. States have a patchwork of systems for expunging or clearing records for cannabis-related offenses, including Pennsylvania's 2022 effort to expunge records. Until records are expunged, and revenue shared with the communities historically targeted by the racist war on drugs, Black and Brown communities will not be whole.

It is imperative that cannabis legalization proceed, and proceed with an eye towards equitable repair to historic harms; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Celebrates the removal of cannabis from Schedule I of the Federal Controlled Substances Act, recognizes the urgent need for equitably distributed cannabis sales revenue that restores, and repairs communities historically targeted by the war on drugs, and calls on the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to legalize and equitably tax cannabis.