Legislation Text

File #: 180374, **Version:** 0

Calling upon the Congress of the United States to pass S.1689, legislation offered by Senator Cory Booker, to federally decriminalize and otherwise improve public policy with relation to marijuana.

WHEREAS, Marijuana, or cannabis, is a psychotropic drug with medicinal, recreational, and religious applications that has been used for several millennia into the present, with at least half of the American population reported having done so, according to current polls; and

WHEREAS, Marijuana does not present or increase the risk of overdose deaths, long-term health problems, violent crime, or serious injury, making it safer than alcohol or tobacco, despite its fictitious reputation as a so-called “gateway drug”; and

WHEREAS, Marijuana criminalization at the federal level was sold with explicitly racist arguments about who used it and to what effect, which set the stage for racist enforcement of marijuana bans, a legacy that has continued in places that have legalized medical uses or moved towards a summary offense regime; and

WHEREAS, The federal prohibition on marijuana has ignored state concerns, including preexisting bans in some states, research into medical application, and prioritization of both enforcement and treatment dollars; and

WHEREAS, Federal enforcement practice began to align more closely with renewed state medical marijuana programs in 2013, when a memorandum from then-Deputy Attorney General Cole laid out the parameters by which those programs would not initiate federal prosecution, which was reinforced the following year, when Congress adopted a budgetary rule preventing appropriations from being used for those very prosecutions; and

WHEREAS, The recent rescission of the Cole memo by Attorney General Jefferson Sessions upends the beneficial side of limited federal deregulation, which includes medical relief from those with certain illnesses and conditions, reduction of opioid abuse, and economic development, while maintaining the negative aspects of continued racist enforcement of drug laws; and

WHEREAS, Senator Booker’s legislation would legalize marijuana at the federal level and withhold federal money, including for building jails and prisons, from states whose cannabis laws are shown to disproportionately incarcerate minorities, as well as expunge federal convictions for marijuanause and possession, and entitle prisoners serving time for a marijuana offense to a sentencing hearing, while also allowing those aggrieved by a disproportionate arrest or imprisonment rate to sue; and

WHEREAS, The end of federal criminal laws regarding marijuana would empower states to strike the right balance for their respective publics, with the backstop that citizens would be able to reject discriminatory implementation; and

WHEREAS, Given the innocuous nature of the substance, the accepting attitude of the public, the racist history of enforcement, the emphasis on decarceration and drug treatment, and the economic potential of marijuana decriminalization, S.1689 is the best path forward for marijuana regulation in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That this Council does hereby call upon the Congress of the United States to pass S.1689, legislation offered by Senator Cory Booker, to federally decriminalize and otherwise improve public policy with relation to marijuana.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Congress of the United States as evidence of the sentiments of this legislative body.

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