

July 29, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Cosponsor the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA)
(S. 5022)**

Dear Honorable Members of the U.S. Senate,

We urge you to cosponsor the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act (CAOA) (S. 5022), the most comprehensive marijuana regulation bill in Congress that will end marijuana criminalization once and for all. This bill—led by Sens. Booker, Schumer and Wyden—will deliver federal marijuana reform to bring justice and opportunity to our communities.

Earlier this year, the Attorney General issued an order that partially reclassified certain medical marijuana products under Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).¹ While this change has decreased the legal risk of some medical marijuana activity, most marijuana activity in the United States, including most state-regulated marijuana activity, remains federally illegal. In fact, even if marijuana is fully rescheduled from Schedule I to Schedule III of CSA, the criminal penalties and collateral consequences that are in effect today will remain in place.

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, “Schedules of Controlled Substances: Rescheduling of Food and Drug Administration Approved Products Containing Marijuana and Products Containing Marijuana Subject to a Qualifying State-issued License From Schedule I to Schedule III; Corresponding Change to Permit Requirements,” final order. April 23, 2026. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1437441/dl>.

To fully address the conflict between state and federal marijuana laws, Congress must remove marijuana from the CSA (“deschedule”) and pass a regulatory framework grounded in justice, public health, and safety. This is precisely what the CAO does. The bill decriminalizes marijuana by descheduling it from the CSA and provides a regulatory framework for marijuana to protect health and safety while centering reparative justice.

Specifically, the legislation does the following:

- Ends federal marijuana criminalization by removing marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act (CSA);
- Resentences and automatically expunges federal marijuana convictions;
- Restores civil rights and federal benefits like assistance for food and housing;
- Protects noncitizens from immigration consequences based on marijuana activity, including state-legal activity;
- Establishes a program to help eradicate barriers to marijuana business licensing and employment for people directly impacted by the war on drugs;
- Reinvests in communities that have been disproportionately targeted by marijuana criminalization;
- Provides explicit protections for workers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and helps marijuana businesses prevent and remediate workplace hazards;
- Facilitates research into the potential medical benefits and health risks associated with marijuana use;
- Redefines hemp by setting limits on hemp-derived THC and treats products with THC above those limits like marijuana;
- Protects youth by establishing age restrictions on underage sales and advertising aimed at minors; and
- Creates an advisory committee to ensure that federal marijuana regulations protect the health and safety of patients and consumers.

As long as marijuana remains anywhere in the CSA, the harms of criminalization will persist. Under marijuana *rescheduling*, people will continue to be arrested in the United States for marijuana, including for simple possession. Despite similar rates of use, Black people are arrested nearly four times as often as their white counterparts for marijuana

conduct.² In addition to expunging federal marijuana convictions, the CAO A would help restore the rights of those unjustly arrested for marijuana at the state level by providing funding to expunge such offenses.

Additionally, descheduling marijuana through the CAO A would benefit patients and consumers by creating a clear regulatory framework rooted in public health. The bill would create nationwide labeling standards to provide essential information to ensure safe product use and establish a public education campaign to prevent the misuse of marijuana.

As we work to gather cosponsors, we encourage the Senate to continue to solicit input on this legislation, including by holding hearings and briefings on the issue of federal marijuana reform. We are at both a pivotal and historic moment for federal marijuana reform. **We urge you to cosponsor the CAO A to finally end the devastating effects of marijuana criminalization.**

For any questions about this letter, please contact Maritza Perez Medina, Director of Federal Affairs at the Drug Policy Alliance, at mperez@drugpolicy.org.

Sincerely,

2nd Chance
ACLU of Kentucky
Alianza for Opportunity
All People's Health Collective
American Civil Liberties Union
California NORML
CAN-DO Foundation
Cannabis Regulators of Color Coalition (CRCC)
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)
Clergy for a New Drug Policy
Cruel Consequences: Portraits of Misguided Law
Disability Rights California

² American Civil Liberties Union, "Extreme Racial Disparities Persist in Marijuana Arrests," accessed August 20, 2025, <https://graphics.aclu.org/marijuana-arrest-report/>.

Doctors for Drug Policy Reform
Dream.Org
Drug Policy Alliance
Fair and Just Prosecution
Free Hearts
Housing Works, Inc.
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Impact MN
JustLeadershipUSA
Kentucky NORML
Latino Cannabis Alliance
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Minorities for Medical Marijuana
Mission Green
Mommieactivist and Sons
MontcoNORML
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Social Workers
National Harm Reduction Coalition
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Homelessness Law Center
National Immigration Project
National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)
NH Youth Movement
NORML Tallahassee
Organized Communities Against Deportations
Sea Change Recovery Community Organization
StoptheDrugWar.org
Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP)
SPLC Action
T3A Consulting LLC
The Legal Aid Society
The Porchlight Collective SAP
Truth Pharm, Inc.

DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE

131 West 33rd Street • 15th Floor • New York, NY 10001
212.613.8020 • contact@drugpolicy.org

drugpolicy.org

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