

Maryland Governor, NAACP President Advocate Cannabis Pardons

Maryland Governor and NAACP President Promote Historic Mass Cannabis Pardon

Maryland Governor Wes Moore and NAACP President Derrick Johnson are actively promoting the state's historic mass marijuana pardon, emphasizing its potential to unlock economic opportunities for those previously targeted by criminalization. However, Moore is also highlighting the necessity of guiding cannabis pardons recipients through the process of record expungement, as many records weren't automatically cleared by his clemency move.

Governor Moore's Advocacy and Legislative Support

Over the past few weeks, Governor Moore has been advocating for the 175,000 pardons he issued for cannabis possession and paraphernalia convictions. This move has garnered praise from prominent figures, including the White House and Colorado Governor Jared Polis. In recent Instagram live sessions, Moore discussed the clemency action with NAACP President Derrick Johnson and activist Brittany Packnett Cunningham.

"You can't celebrate the benefits of legalization if you do not wrestle with the consequences of criminalization," Moore stated. "You can't do it. This is just basic fairness."

Economic and Social Implications

The mass pardon aims to rectify historical injustices and pave the way for a better future. Johnson emphasized the transformative impact of this decision on individuals who can now seek gainful employment without the stigma of a criminal record.

"They are not walking around with a scarlet letter. They can actually be contributing members of society," Johnson said. He pointed out that the prohibition of cannabis was a racially discriminatory "trap that created barriers for some of the most intelligent, gifted individuals this society has ever produced."

Governor Moore's Perspective

Governor Moore highlighted the wide-ranging consequences of having a misdemeanor marijuana conviction, affecting areas such as obtaining barber licenses, government contracts, student loans, and home loans. He stressed the importance of addressing these issues in the context of cannabis legalization.

"The fact that we have used cannabis as this cudgel for so long, and then we're willing to say, 'but we're going to open up a market' and not wrestle with the fact that so many people and families have been so directly impacted on this, it just did not make sense," Moore said.

Record Expungement: Next Steps

Moore also noted that while over 40,000 convictions were automatically expunged, more than 100,000 pardon recipients need to take additional steps to formalize their relief through the expungement process. He encouraged these individuals to visit the state's website to begin the expungement process, emphasizing that the gubernatorial pardon simplifies this procedure.

Cannabis Market Impact

Since the launch of Maryland's adult-use cannabis market in July of last year, licensed retailers have sold over \$1.1 billion in legal marijuana products. This includes more than \$700 million to adult consumers and \$400 million in medical marijuana sales, according to the Maryland Cannabis Administration (MCA). The state collected nearly \$15 million in [cannabis sales tax revenue](#) during the first quarter of 2024, marking a slight increase from the previous quarter.

Broader Legislative Efforts

Beyond cannabis, Governor Moore signed bills to establish a psychedelics task force to study legal access to substances like psilocybin and DMT. This reflects a broader commitment to reforming drug policies and exploring alternative medicinal treatments.

Governor Moore's mass marijuana pardon represents a significant step toward rectifying past injustices and unlocking economic potential for many Maryland residents. By collaborating with leaders like NAACP President Derrick Johnson, Moore aims to ensure that the benefits of legalization extend to those previously disadvantaged by criminalization. As the state continues to develop its cannabis market and explore new legislative initiatives, the focus remains on equity, progress, and creating opportunities for all.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

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