

Maryland Governor NAACP President: Cannabis Pardons Boost Economy

Maryland Governor and NAACP President Promote Mass Marijuana Pardon to Unlock Economic Potential

July 2024 – Annapolis, MD – Maryland Governor Wes Moore and NAACP President Derrick Johnson are advocating for the state’s historic mass marijuana pardon, emphasizing its potential to unlock economic opportunities for those disproportionately affected by criminalization. Governor Moore has also highlighted the need for continued efforts to expunge the records of many pardon recipients.

Over the past few weeks, Governor Moore has been actively promoting the 175,000 pardons he issued for cannabis possession and paraphernalia convictions. This significant clemency move has garnered praise from various quarters, including the White House and Colorado Governor Jared Polis. In recent Instagram Live sessions, Moore discussed the clemency action with NAACP President 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. “This is just basic fairness.”

Addressing Historical Injustices

Governor Moore’s initiative aims to address the longstanding impacts of cannabis criminalization, particularly on marginalized communities. Johnson lauded the decision, envisioning a future where those affected can fully participate in society without the stigma of past convictions.

“I can already imagine all of the individuals who have benefited now from this decision, and they can be gainfully employed,” Johnson said. “They are not walking around with a scarlet letter. They can actually be contributing members of society.”

Johnson further described prohibition as a racially discriminatory “trap” that created barriers for many talented individuals. “Now they can really share their gifts—not only for their families, not only for their neighborhoods and the African community, but for democracy,” he said.

Expungement Process

Despite the large number of pardons, Governor Moore stressed the importance of expunging records, particularly for those whose convictions were not automatically cleared. “For over 40,000 [convictions], there’s nothing left for you to do. It’s done. The signature just cleared your record, and your record is now done and expunged,” Moore explained. “For the rest who that might not be their case, just simply go through the state’s website, and also you’ll be able to then go through beginning that expungement process.”

Moore acknowledged that while the mass pardon is a significant step, it is not the final one. “Now the big thing I want to say is this is the first step. We got more to come because there are still wrongs when it came to particularly about how we looked at cannabis that our state is continuing to push on,” he said.

Economic Impact and Legal Market

Since the launch of Maryland’s adult-use cannabis market last July, the state has seen substantial economic benefits. Licensed retailers have sold over \$1.1 billion worth of legal marijuana products, including \$700 million to adult consumers and \$400 million in medical marijuana sales. The Maryland Cannabis Administration (MCA) reported nearly \$15 million in marijuana sales tax revenue during the first quarter of 2024.

“When I signed the Cannabis Reform Act into law last May, it was a beacon of hope and equity and progress—and we’re proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish to date,” Moore said. “Since then, we’ve seen the tangible benefits of this law, from the decriminalization of cannabis to the creation of new economic opportunities and the establishment of social equity programs through our Office of Social Equity.”

Further Legislative Efforts

In addition to cannabis reform, Governor Moore signed legislation in May to establish a psychedelics task force. This task force will explore the potential for legal access to substances like psilocybin and DMT, reflecting a broader shift towards reconsidering drug policies in Maryland.

As Maryland continues to navigate the complexities of [cannabis legalization](#) and criminal justice reform, Governor Moore’s efforts underscore the importance of addressing past injustices while creating a framework for future economic and social benefits. The ongoing work to expunge records and the successful rollout of the adult-use cannabis market highlight the state’s commitment to equity and progress.

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