

White House Defers Cannabis Rescheduling Decision to DOJ Following Evidence-Based HHS Recommendation

The White House has indicated that the Justice Department (DOJ) will now be responsible for making the final decision regarding the scheduling of marijuana, following a recommendation from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Independent Review by HHS

During a press briefing on Monday, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre highlighted that the HHS had completed its independent review of cannabis scheduling. The agency recommended reclassifying marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), a decision guided by evidence.

DOJ Takes the Reins

Jean-Pierre emphasized that the matter is now in the hands of the DOJ. She encouraged any inquiries or input regarding marijuana rescheduling to be directed to the DOJ at their discretion.

Anticipation for DEA Decision

While the DEA has not provided a specific timeline for completing its review and submitting a recommendation, there is anticipation that it will be before the November election. This is partly due to past scheduling precedents and the Biden administration's increased focus on the issue.

Biden and Harris's Prioritization of Cannabis Reform

President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have consistently highlighted the importance of cannabis reform. Biden has mentioned his marijuana scheduling directive and clemency actions in various public addresses, including the State of the Union.

FDA Support for Prompt Action

The head of the FDA under HHS has urged the DEA not to delay its decision on marijuana scheduling, emphasizing that there is no reason for prolonged deliberation.

Resistance within DEA

Despite the push for rescheduling from the Biden administration and health officials, there are reports of resistance within the DEA. Some officials are purportedly disputing the HHS findings, raising concerns about the safety profile and medical potential of marijuana.

As the DOJ takes the lead in the marijuana scheduling decision, stakeholders await further developments in the ongoing federal-state cannabis policy debate.

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