

Schmidt, Kim

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Sent: Friday, July 3, 2020 6:10 PM
To: DOJ: Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability
Subject: Testimony for Commission on Police Accountability, Community, and Transparency

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Dear Commission Members,

Please accept and consider my below testimony in support of cannabis legalization as a tool to improve community-police relations. There are three main points I'd like to make.

First, maintaining cannabis prohibition requires police to enforce a very unpopular law, negatively impacting community relations. 68% of Granite Staters support legalization, according to a [March 2019 poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center](#). Additionally, 66% of Americans support legalization, according to a [October 2019 Gallup poll](#). Despite overwhelming support from the public and in the NH House, legalization bills have been killed by the Senate. In 2020, [HB 1648](#) would have legalized cannabis possession and limited home cultivation for adults 21 and older — it passed the House (236-112) but was tabled without a hearing by the Senate.

Second, racial disparities persist despite New Hampshire's decriminalization law. The law decriminalizing possession of $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce or less of cannabis took effect in September 2017. In 2018, according to data [reported by the FBI and published by the ACLU](#), Blacks were still 4.11 times more likely than whites to be arrested for cannabis possession despite using cannabis at nearly identical rates. While these racial disparities persisted in all 50 states, the ACLU found that they were much lower in states that had significant experience with cannabis legalization: Colorado had the lowest racial disparity of any state in 2018 (1.54x), and the other three states that pioneered cannabis legalization in 2012 and 2014 joined Colorado among the seven states with the lowest disparities (Alaska, 1.56x; Oregon, 1.82x; Washington, 2.14x). In addition, the total number of arrests and citations — and unnecessary police-civilian interactions — plummeted in legalization states.

Finally, it is worth remembering that cannabis is legal for adults to grow and possess in all neighboring jurisdictions. [Eleven states, including all three neighboring states](#), have legalized cannabis for adults' use. Cannabis is also legal throughout Canada. There are now more than 45 retail cannabis stores operating in Massachusetts, including seven within 15 miles of the New Hampshire border. A new store recently opened [three miles from the border in Haverhill](#). Under these circumstances, it makes no sense whatsoever for N.H. police to continue punishing adults who choose to grow and consume cannabis.

Thank you, Commission Members, for your time and commitment to improving New Hampshire's criminal justice policies. I appreciate the opportunity to offer this testimony and appreciate your consideration of the ideas and facts offered within it.

Kind regards,
Mandi Neff