



Express your support for cannabis legalization to the N.H. Police Accountability Commission

Tell the N.H. Police Accountability Commission: Cannabis Legalization Is Necessary to Improve Police-Community Relations

On June 16, 2020, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed [an executive order creating a Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community, and Transparency](#). The commission is expected to “engage all interested and relevant public, private, and community stakeholders and develop recommendations for reforms that the Commission deems necessary to enhance transparency, accountability, and community relations in law enforcement.”

Cannabis legalization is one reform that would certainly improve police-community relations in New Hampshire. To learn more about the commission and how to submit written testimony, [visit the commission’s website](#).

The commission is required to issue its recommendations in early August, so it is important that we act quickly. There are no specific guidelines for testimony, so it can be as brief as a couple of paragraphs or as long as several pages. After you prepare your testimony, [email it to the commission](#).

For your reference, [here is the testimony I submitted on behalf of MPP](#), and here are some talking points and resources that might assist you in preparing an email to the commission:

1. Maintaining cannabis prohibition requires police to enforce a very unpopular law, negatively impacting community relations.

a. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of Granite Staters support legalization (27% opposed).

—[March 5, 2019 poll, UNH Survey Center](#)

b. Sixty-six percent (66%) of Americans support legalization.

—[October 2019 Gallup poll](#)

c. Despite overwhelming support from the public and in the 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.

2. Racial disparities persist despite decriminalization law.

a. New Hampshire’s 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.

b. 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.

3. Cannabis is legal for adults to grow and possess in all neighboring jurisdictions.

a. **Eleven states, including all three neighboring states, have legalized cannabis for adults' use.** Cannabis is also legal throughout Canada.

b. 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.
