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116 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
P.O. BOX 202003
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2003
(717) 772-2297



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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Cannabis Clean Slate
Monday, April 20 | 2 p.m.

Braid Mill | 441 High St. | Philadelphia, PA 19144

Representative Andre Carroll

- 2 p.m. Welcome and member introductions
- 2:05 p.m. [Stephanie Shepard](#), Director
Last Prisoner Project
Q & A with Legislators
- 2:30 p.m. [Dr. Christi M. Smith](#)
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Q & A with Legislators
- 3:00 p.m. [Jamie Gullen](#), Managing Attorney – Employment Unit & Youth Justice
Community Legal Services
Q & A with Legislators



Testimony from Stephanie Shepard
Executive Director
Last Prisoner Project

RE: PA House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on Cannabis Clean Slate

April 20, 2026

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

Last May, after years of promises and false starts, the Pennsylvania House not only introduced a bill to legalize adult-use cannabis – they quickly voted the bill out of the chamber and sent it over to the Senate.

But as lawmakers and advocates have rightfully raised concerns about the bill's most contentious component, the state-run store model, another key provision has gone almost entirely unnoticed. Hidden in plain sight in the nearly 200-page bill are provisions that, if enacted, would become the boldest and most transformative retroactive relief laws among states with legalized adult-use cannabis.

Retroactive relief is simple in principle: if we've decided something shouldn't be illegal, then those punished under outdated laws shouldn't continue to suffer the consequences. In practice, this means releasing individuals who are still incarcerated for outdated cannabis convictions and making sure people have a fresh start by clearing their criminal records of all cannabis charges.

This concept is a significant first step in addressing the myriad consequences of the decades-long overcriminalization of cannabis, and it has become increasingly adopted as part of statewide legalization efforts in states as varied as Minnesota and Missouri.

The retroactive relief provisions contained in HB 1200, the first legalization bill to advance out of the General Assembly, would automatically expunge all cannabis-related arrests, convictions, and charges at no cost to the individual. That includes charges that resulted in a diversionary program, including probation without a verdict for cannabis or cannabis paraphernalia. This also includes if the eligible cannabis-related charge is co-mingled with a non-cannabis charge. It

would also vacate every cannabis conviction and sentence imposed before the law takes effect, meaning anyone currently serving time for cannabis would be released.

Perhaps even more notable is how the bill tackles one of the thorniest challenges in retroactive justice: identifying eligible cases in a system where cannabis-specific offenses are often lumped under generic “drug crime” labels. It is a persistent issue that many states, Pennsylvania included, do not have many cannabis-only code offenses; instead, these offenses are more generally considered “drug crimes,” inclusive of all Schedule I drugs. This makes identifying individuals potentially eligible for relief difficult to determine, because their record doesn’t necessarily reflect a cannabis charge, but a “drug charge.”

HB 1200 proposes a smart fix: tasking the state’s drug labs with flagging records that may involve cannabis. It’s an elegant workaround to a problem that’s stymied progress in other states and could serve as a model for reform nationwide.

Pennsylvania has led on justice reform before. It was the first state to enact automatic criminal record clearance under its [“Clean Slate” law](#), and it has expanded eligibility multiple times. But legalization demands more than just expanding on existing systems. When the Commonwealth makes the conscious decision to declare that cannabis use is no longer criminal, it also assumes a responsibility to repair the lives upended by past enforcement.

In other words, cannabis convictions deserve their own pathway to justice; one that reflects the state’s new stance and sheds the lingering penalties of prohibition.

It is also important to note that all of this can be done without jeopardizing public safety. [Research has shown](#) that individuals convicted of drug offenses have significantly lower recidivism rates than those convicted of violent or property-related crimes. When you dig deeper into the data and separate individuals convicted of cannabis-related offenses, the public safety risks fall even further. [A report by the United States Sentencing Commission](#) in 2020 found that individuals convicted of cannabis-related offenses have one of the lowest rates of recidivism when compared to other drug offenses.

This moment requires urgency, but also clarity. The fundamentals of justice demand that any legalization bill include robust, automatic, and meaningful relief for those still carrying the weight of the past. We can’t afford to miss this chance. Let’s get it right.

About Last Prisoner Project

The Last Prisoner Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a national, nonpartisan organization focused on the intersection of cannabis and criminal justice reform. Through policy campaigns, direct intervention, and advocacy, LPP’s policy experts work to redress the past and continuing harms of unjust cannabis laws.

STEPHANIE SHEPARD

Director, Last Prisoner Project

Stephanie Shepard was convicted of conspiracy to distribute marijuana in 2010. As a first-time, non-violent offender, Stephanie was sentenced to ten years in the Federal Bureau Of Prisons. After serving nine years, she was placed on federal probation for an additional five years.

Stephanie now serves as Last Prisoner Project's Executive Director and sits on the organization's Board of Directors. She is adamantly advocating for restorative justice for those who have suffered the Executive Director of the Last Prisoner Project and continue to suffer as she has from the criminalization of cannabis.



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Date: April 20, 2026

Re: Cannabis Clean Slate

Position: SUPPORT

To: The PA House Majority Policy Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Christi Smith, and I am here on behalf of Law Enforcement Action Partnership, or LEAP. For over 20 years, I have worked in dual roles as an adult probation and parole officer in Pennsylvania and as an academic researcher focused on criminal justice policy. I am here today to speak about the real-world impact of marijuana arrests and the need for thoughtful, evidence-based reform.

LEAP is an international nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience serving in the justice system. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

Ten years ago, I would not have imagined myself advocating for marijuana reform. I spent my career enforcing prohibition and supervising individuals penalized for marijuana use. But as I transitioned into academia and engaged with the research surrounding marijuana policy, public safety outcomes, and health impacts, I began to question whether this approach was actually making our communities safer.

What I have come to understand is that marijuana prohibition creates consequences that extend far beyond the initial interaction with the justice system. An arrest, even without a conviction, can limit access to employment, housing, education, and financial stability. For individuals under community supervision, even minor marijuana use can result in technical violations that lead to reincarceration. These are not theoretical outcomes, but everyday occurrences I witnessed throughout my career.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

In Pennsylvania, we operate in a legal gray area for marijuana. While marijuana is permitted for medical use and is decriminalized in some jurisdictions, it remains illegal for adult recreational use. At the same time, [marijuana policy is rapidly evolving across the country, with many states moving away from criminalization and toward regulated frameworks.](#) As a result, Pennsylvania's current approach is increasingly out of step with broader national trends, reinforcing confusion, uneven enforcement, and inconsistent outcomes. From a public safety perspective, this misalignment is inefficient and counterproductive.

Based on my experience and the research, there are several practical areas where revising cannabis legislation reform could meaningfully improve public safety:

- Establishing clear, consistent statewide marijuana policy that aligns with current practices and reduces reliance on criminal enforcement;
- Reforming probation and parole policies, so that marijuana use no longer triggers technical violations and potential reincarceration;
- Creating mechanisms to address past marijuana-related records, so individuals do not carry permanent legal consequences for conduct that is increasingly being reconsidered.

As both a practitioner and a researcher, I believe effective policy must balance accountability, public safety, and fairness. A thoughtful, evidence-based approach to marijuana policy is a public safety strategy and a step toward restoring trust in our system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and perspective.

Officer Christi Smith (Fmr.)
Bucks County Adult Probation and Parole Department, PA
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership

Dr. Christi M. Smith, LEAP

Probation and Parole Officer (Ret.) Hatfield, PA

Dr. Christi Smith began her career in law enforcement as an adult probation and parole officer in 2002. Since then, she has worked throughout Pennsylvania as a drug court specialist and a forensic mental health specialist, doing extensive investigatory work into the intimate partner violence patterns of repeat offenders. She remained a contracted domestic violence investigator through 2019. In 2002, while still working as a probation and parole officer, Dr. Smith began teaching. She was the Director of Criminal Justice at Rosemont College and an adjunct faculty member in the graduate criminal justice program at West Chester University. She teaches a wide-range of criminal justice courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition to teaching, Dr. Smith is a Research Fellow for Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties Policy at the R Street Institute. Her research focus includes wellness among criminal justice professionals and efforts to mitigate the stress and burnout associated with the field. She facilitates stress and burnout related training to current practitioners and regularly presents at professional conferences.

Criminal Records & Workforce Development

One in three Pennsylvanians has a criminal record, and criminal records create substantial barriers to employment, licensing, career advancement, and other economic opportunities. **Robust strategies are needed to ensure that people with records can reach their full potential in the workforce.**

Impact of a Criminal Record

- Criminal records cause significant barriers to employment and career advancement. **Over 90% of employers conduct criminal background checks on prospective employees.**
- People who have been incarcerated experience up to half a million dollars in earnings losses over their lifetimes, and in the aggregate people with records lose \$372 billion in wages every year. Research shows **clearing criminal records leads to a 22% increase in wages within one year.**

Strategies to Increase Workforce Engagement

Community Legal Services (CLS) collaborates with community partners to employ a robust array of strategies aimed at increasing access to the workforce for people with records.

- **Record clearing:** CLS created and advocated for the first Clean Slate law in the nation, which has already sealed 55 million old or minor records through automation. CLS also assists clients with clearing their records by petition and conducts community-based clinics throughout Philadelphia. Sealed records cannot be accessed or used by employers, so **clearing records is one of the most effective ways to help people become employed or advance in their careers.**
- **Fair hiring:** People with records have rights in the hiring process, and employers must consider applicants as individuals. Philadelphia law also prohibits most employers from considering records after seven years. **CLS advocates for our clients to become employed and has an 80% success rate helping clients with records get hired into high-quality jobs.**
- **Occupational licensing:** CLS spearheaded changes to the state licensing laws to make it much easier for people with records to get occupational licenses, including in high-growth fields like nursing. We also advise and represent clients who have records and are trying to become licensed.
- **Youth advocacy:** CLS's youth justice project provides holistic and community-based assistance for young people who are looking to advance their careers. CLS has expertise in juvenile expungement law and fair hiring rights for youth, and helps young people access other services they may need to **stabilize their lives and further their education or employment goals.**

These strategies are highly effective at increasing access to the workforce and career advancement for people with records. For more information, please contact Jamie Gullen at jgullen@clsphila.org.



Center City Office:

1424 Chestnut St. | Philadelphia, PA 19102-2505 | Telephone: 215-981-3700 clsphila.org

North Philadelphia Law Center:

1410 West Erie Ave. | Philadelphia, PA 19140-4136 | Telephone: 215-227-2400

DO YOU HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD?

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SEAL IT!

Pennsylvania's new Clean Slate law expands eligibility!

TO FIND OUT WHAT IS ON YOUR RECORD AND IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SEALING VISIT: WWW.MYCLEANSLATEPA.COM

**Some felony
convictions can
be sealed after:**

10 YEARS

**Most misdemeanor
convictions can
be sealed after:**

7 YEARS

**Summary convictions
will be sealed
automatically after:**

5 YEARS

Most felony and misdemeanor convictions in these categories can be sealed:

- ✔ Drug crimes
- ✔ Theft crimes, including Retail Theft and Receiving Stolen Property
- ✔ Trespass
- ✔ Forgery & Fraud crimes, including Access/Devise Fraud, Bad Checks, ID Theft and Welfare Fraud
- ✔ Criminal Mischief
- ✔ Conspiracy to commit an eligible crime

Most misdemeanor convictions and all summary convictions can be sealed, including:

- ✔ Recklessly Endangering Another Person
- ✔ Simple Assault
- ✔ DUI
- ✔ Disorderly Conduct
- ✔ Resisting Arrest
- ✔ Harassment
- ✔ Terroristic Threats
- ✔ Possession of an Instrument of a Crime
- ✔ Prostitution

A sealed record is not publicly available and cannot be used for employment, housing, or education purposes, but can still be viewed by law enforcement.

Jamie Gullen, CLS

Managing Attorney – Employment Unit & Youth Justice Project

Jamie Gullen is the Managing Attorney of the Employment Unit and Youth Justice Project at Community Legal Services. Ms. Gullen began her career at CLS as a law student intern in 2010, and was awarded a Penn Law fellowship sponsored by the Langer, Grogan, and Diver law firm to continue working at CLS upon graduation. Ms. Gullen's work focuses on increasing access to education and employment opportunities for youth who have juvenile or criminal records through a combination of direct representation, community education, and policy advocacy. Ms. Gullen also leads CLS's community-based record clearing programs and works to expand record clearing as a remedy in Pennsylvania and around the country.

Prior to law school, Ms. Gullen taught elementary school in the South Bronx through Teach for America.

Ms. Gullen has received several awards including the Penn Law Young Alumni Award, the Sean Peretta Service Award from the Philadelphia Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division, and the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network's Outstanding Leadership Award as part of a team that advocated for Pennsylvania's Clean Slate law. She has published multiple articles and reports on topics including racial justice in education policy, discrimination against young mothers of color with criminal records, and increasing access to higher education for people with juvenile or criminal records.

Ms. Gullen earned her J.D. cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 2012. She received her B.S. from Cornell University in 2007, and M.S. in Teaching from Pace University in 2009.



April 20, 2026

Cannabis Clean Slate Testimony

Dear Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee:

My name is Karen O'Keefe. I am the director of state policies for the non-profit Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest cannabis policy reform organization in the nation.

We are grateful to the committee for holding this hearing on Cannabis Clean Slate, which is a key component of cannabis justice. According to Susquehanna Polling & Research, 69% of Pennsylvania residents believe that cannabis should be legal and regulated for adults 21 and older.¹ Pennsylvania law is out of touch with voters. Not only is cannabis still illegal in Pennsylvania, it is not even decriminalized under state law. The Keystone State is one of only 19 states where possession of cannabis is a criminal offense, carrying possible jail time. Even deep red states such as Mississippi and North Dakota have "decriminalized" cannabis.

Cannabis arrests and convictions derail lives and destroy hope. Criminal records trigger collateral consequences that make it difficult to get housing, employment, and professional licenses.² One survey found 92% percent of employers report using criminal records checks on some or all applicants.³

While Pennsylvania already has a Clean Slate law, misdemeanors are only expunged after seven years and felonies after 10 years.⁴ In the interim, a vast amount of damage can be done.

In college, a friend of mine abandoned his plan to go to law school because of fears his cannabis conviction would prevent him from being admitted to the bar. Another friend gave up on his dream to become a teacher due to similar concerns. At MPP, we have heard from many other individuals whose lives have been derailed due to cannabis convictions. Many were traumatized by incarceration. And large numbers spent thousands of dollars they could ill afford on lawyers and fees to try to avoid incarceration and the stigma of an arrest.

With half of Americans admitting to having used cannabis,⁵ who gets branded with the stigma of a criminal record and who does not is arbitrary at best. In reality, it's far worse than

¹ Harrison, Cann, "Poll: Pennsylvanians across party lines support a regulated cannabis marketplace," City and State Pennsylvania, April 13, 2026.

² See: Jamiles Lartey, "How Criminal Records Hold Back Millions of People," *The Marshall Project*, April 1, 2023.

³ Society for Human Resources Management Background Checking: Conducting Criminal Background Checks, slide 3 (Jan. 22, 2010) https://www.slideshare.net/shrm/background-check-criminal?from=share_email

⁴ See: <https://clsphila.org/my-clean-slate/>

⁵ Anna Jackson and Katherine Schaeffer, "9 facts about Americans and marijuana," Pew Research Center, July 8, 2025.

arbitrary: the data shows staggering racial disparities in arrests and sentencing for cannabis in Pennsylvania despite similar cannabis use rates.

It is past time Pennsylvania gives its residents back their futures by enacting Cannabis Clean Slate. The Commonwealth also needs to stop ensnaring cannabis consumers in the criminal justice system in the first place by legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults and reducing the penalty for minors to a civil fine.

I. Pennsylvania has made a quarter of a million arrests since states began legalization

Data from the FBI Crime Explorer shows that Pennsylvania authorities made more than 253,000 arrests since Colorado and Washington became the first two states to legalize cannabis in late 2012. That is a staggering number. For many, their cannabis arrest was the worst thing that ever happened to them.

Between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2026, the FBI data shows authorities made at least 212,726 arrests for cannabis possession and 41,111 for sales or manufacturing.⁶ That is nearly two cannabis arrests for every 100 residents of Pennsylvania. In 2025 alone, law enforcement agencies reported 12,146 cannabis arrests in Pennsylvania, including 10,858 for possession.

Pennsylvania Cannabis Arrests	
Cannabis Arrests from Jan. 2013 - Dec. 2025	253,837
Cannabis Possession Arrests, 2013-2025	212,726
Cannabis Arrests, 2025	12,146
Cannabis Possession Arrests, 2025	10,858
Cannabis Arrest Rate, Per 100,000 Residents, 2025	93.01
Cannabis Arrest Rate, Per 100,000 Residents, 2013-2025	1,944

II. Arrests plummet with legalization.

An MPP analysis of FBI Crime Explorer data that was released today shows that cannabis arrests dropped in every state after legalization.⁷ To stop ruining lives over cannabis, states need to not only wipe away the stigma of a record for past offenses — they must also stop those arrests going forward. Creating a legal market shifts demand to that regulated market, reducing illegal sales and thus arrests.

⁶ FBI's Crime Explorer <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/> (Accessed: April 16, 2026.)

⁷ Available at: www.mpp.org/ArrestReport

On average, legalization states' cannabis arrest rates have dropped 85.53%, with possession arrests dropping by an average of 84.61% and sales arrests decreasing by an average of 80.39%.

III. Both arrests and sentencing for cannabis are marked by racial disparities in Pennsylvania.

Cannabis prohibition was borne of racism,⁸ and it continues to be marred by unequal enforcement.

According to data reported to the FBI, 75,103 of the 212,584 cannabis possession arrests in Pennsylvania since 2013 were of people identified as Black or African American. That's 35% of the arrestees, in a state where the Census reports 12.4% of Pennsylvania's population is Black or African American. That is 2.8 times higher than if it were proportionate!

Meanwhile, partial data provided by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing shows that racial disparities also plague cannabis sentencing. In cases where a cannabis offense was the most serious offense, 46.7% of those sentenced to incarceration were Black.⁹ That's almost 3.75 times higher than what would be proportionate. For those where cannabis possession was the most serious offense, 42.5% were Black.

IV. Features That Should Be Included in Cannabis Clean Slate

We urge the policy committee to support, and the Pennsylvania General Assembly to enact, Cannabis Clean Slate legislation coupled with legalization that includes:

1) The state-initiated expungement of all cannabis arrests and convictions for which time has been served.

Most Pennsylvanians agree that cannabis should be legal. Past offenses should be wiped off of records to stop derailing lives.

2) The dismissal of all pending cannabis possession charges.

⁸ For example, a top advisor to then-President Nixon said Nixon launched the War on Drugs because it allowed him to vilify and criminalize his political enemies: "We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be against the war (Vietnam) or Black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and the Blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did." Dan Baum, "Legalize It All," Harper's Magazine.

⁹ I've included the reports. Note that these totals are partial for a few reasons: 1) They only included sentences for offenses that we could be certain involved marijuana and prior to 2020 our data for (a)(16) offenses did not include drug type. 2) They only include the counties reporting to the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. 3) They only include sentences from county Courts of Common Pleas. Philadelphia Municipal Courts are not required to report their sentences to the Commission, so Philadelphia's marijuana sentencing is not fully captured in these reports.

As part of legalization, pending cannabis possession charges should be dropped.

3) A review of all other pending cannabis charges, with a presumption that they should be dropped.

The prosecutor could have an opportunity to object and overcome the presumption that dropping the cannabis charge(s) is in the interests of justice. For example, a D.A. could overcome the presumption if an adult allegedly furnished cannabis to a minor.

4) Anyone serving a term of incarceration or supervision should be granted a rapid hearing to determine if their release is in the interests of justice.

There should be a rebuttable presumption that re-sentencing to the time or supervision they already served is in the interests of justice. A prosecutor could have an opportunity to object and to prove that the release would be a danger to public safety or not in the interests of justice. (For example, if a person pled down from a violent or sex offense, they could overcome the presumption.)


Concluding Thoughts

Five of Pennsylvania's six neighboring states have legalized cannabis for adults. Polling shows Pennsylvania voters want to legalize and regulate cannabis, too, but Pennsylvania lacks a citizens' initiative process. While Pennsylvania's House of Representatives passed a state-run stores bill, that approach was a non-starter in the Senate. We urge the policy committee to work to bring together all caucuses and to get legalization and Cannabis Clean Slate legislation past the finish line.

It's time for lawmakers to work together to legalize and regulate cannabis, to stop branding residents as criminals for relaxing with cannabis. As part of legalization, it's important to wipe away the scarlet letter of arrests and convictions for a plant that is safer than alcohol.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Karen O'Keefe, JD
Director of State Policies
202-905-2012
kokeefe@mpp.org

Summary of sentences imposed for 35-780-113 (a)(31), possession of small amount (<30 grams) of marijuana, Pennsylvania 2013-2024

Category	Total Number	Incarceration								Probation						Other RS	
		State Incarceration				County Incarceration				Restrictive			Regular			N	%
		N	%	Mean	Mean	N	%	Mean	Mean	N	%	Mean Length	N	%	Mean Length		
All Sentences	14,288	39	0.3%	0.42	0.90	1,148	8.0%	0.30	0.82	15	0.1%	0.67	4,118	28.8%	0.98	8,968	62.8%
Age																	
<25	5,357	12	0.2%	0.35	0.77	401	7.5%	0.30	0.83	5	0.1%	0.81	1,617	30.2%	0.98	3,322	62.0%
25-34	5,246	18	0.3%	0.46	0.99	441	8.4%	0.29	0.81	5	0.1%	0.74	1,497	28.5%	0.98	3,285	62.6%
35-44	2,294	5	0.2%	0.49	0.97	183	8.0%	0.30	0.80	2	0.1%	0.41	627	27.3%	0.98	1,477	64.4%
45-54	969	3	0.3%	0.49	0.99	93	9.6%	0.32	0.83	3	0.3%	0.49	269	27.8%	0.98	601	62.0%
55+	418	1	0.2%	0.16	0.36	30	7.2%	0.37	0.83	0	0.0%	0.00	105	25.1%	0.99	282	67.5%
Race																	
Black	7,733	21	0.3%	0.45	0.95	442	5.7%	0.30	0.79	7	0.1%	0.61	2,185	28.3%	0.98	5,078	65.7%
White	6,101	17	0.3%	0.39	0.83	665	10.9%	0.31	0.83	6	0.1%	0.63	1,822	29.9%	0.98	3,591	58.9%
Other	454	1	0.2%	0.49	0.99	41	9.0%	0.24	0.76	2	0.4%	1.00	111	24.4%	0.99	299	65.9%
Sex																	
Male	12,099	37	0.3%	0.43	0.91	1,024	8.5%	0.31	0.82	13	0.1%	0.69	3,470	28.7%	0.98	7,555	62.4%
Female	2,189	2	0.1%	0.33	0.67	124	5.7%	0.27	0.75	2	0.1%	0.54	648	29.6%	0.98	1,413	64.6%

Notes: Based on most serious offense in a criminal incident. Time in months. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. Data in this report are based upon the information reported to the Commission on Sentencing by county Courts of Common Pleas. The Commission relies upon the courts for the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Summary of sentences imposed for 35-780-113 (a)(16), related to simple possession of marijuana, Pennsylvania 2013-2024

Category	Total Number	Incarceration								Probation						Other RS	
		State Incarceration				County Incarceration				Restrictive			Regular			N	%
		N	%	Mean	Mean	N	%	Mean	Mean	N	%	Mean Length	N	%	Mean Length		
All Sentences	2,047	36	1.8%	6.29	15.09	255	12.5%	3.29	12.73	42	2.1%	5.93	1,519	74.2%	11.05	195	9.5%
Age																	
<25	539	4	0.7%	5.25	12.00	52	9.6%	2.36	11.03	1	0.2%	2.00	432	80.1%	10.62	50	9.3%
25-34	775	14	1.8%	6.19	13.52	81	10.5%	3.18	13.42	17	2.2%	4.83	584	75.4%	11.24	79	10.2%
35-44	458	13	2.8%	7.54	18.46	76	16.6%	4.30	13.66	15	3.3%	6.20	313	68.3%	11.40	41	9.0%
45-54	179	5	2.8%	4.20	13.20	29	16.2%	2.93	12.86	5	2.8%	7.79	123	68.7%	11.02	17	9.5%
55+	95	-	-	-	-	17	17.9%	2.72	10.29	4	4.2%	8.25	67	70.5%	10.66	7	7.4%
Race																	
Black	1,169	25	2.1%	6.18	15.25	140	12.0%	3.12	12.85	28	2.4%	5.71	868	74.3%	11.15	108	9.2%
White	794	9	1.1%	7.00	15.33	111	14.0%	3.42	12.52	13	1.6%	6.63	587	73.9%	10.82	74	9.3%
Other	84	2	2.4%	4.50	12.00	4	4.8%	5.43	14.75	1	1.2%	2.96	64	76.2%	11.91	13	15.5%
Sex																	
Male	1,722	32	1.9%	6.33	15.10	229	13.3%	3.40	12.82	33	1.9%	5.81	1,267	73.6%	11.14	161	9.3%
Female	325	4	1.2%	6.00	15.00	26	8.0%	2.29	12.00	9	2.8%	6.38	252	77.5%	10.61	34	10.5%

Notes: Based on most serious offense in a criminal incident. Time in months. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. Data in this report are based upon the information reported to the Commission on Sentencing by county Courts of Common Pleas. The Commission relies upon the courts for the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Summary of sentences imposed for other marijuana related offenses, Pennsylvania 2013-2024

Category	Total Number	Incarceration								Probation						Other RS	
		State Incarceration				County Incarceration				Restrictive			Regular			N	%
		N	%	Mean Min	Mean Max	N	%	Mean Min	Mean Max	N	%	Mean Length	N	%	Mean Length		
All Sentences	11,691	971	8.3%	15.03	36.24	3,968	33.9%	5.10	20.45	1007	8.6%	7.65	5,596	47.9%	30.69	149	1.3%
35-10231.130-(a)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100.0%	24.00	-	-
35-10231.130-(a)(1)	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	33.3%	6.00	2	66.7%
35-10231.1304-(a)	4	-	-	-	-	1	25.0%	0.07	12.00	1	25.0%	1.00	1	25.0%	12.00	1	25.0%
35-10231.1306-(a)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100.0%	12.00	-	-
35-10231.1308-(a)(1)	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6.7%	6.00	5	33.3%	5.40	9	60.0%
35-780-113-(a)(12)	44	8	18.2%	13.01	31.00	23	52.3%	9.00	22.82	2	4.5%	6.00	8	18.2%	37.50	3	6.8%
35-780-113-(a)(14)	11	-	-	-	-	3	27.3%	6.01	23.00	-	-	-	8	72.7%	14.99	-	-
35-780-113-(a)(3)(iii)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100.0%	0.99	-	-
35-780-113-(a)(30)	11,611	963	8.3%	15.05	36.28	3,941	33.9%	5.08	20.44	1003	8.6%	7.66	5,570	48.0%	30.75	134	1.2%
Age																	
<18	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	50.0%	0.86	1	50.0%	36.00	-	-
18-24	4,105	178	4.3%	14.83	31.67	1,281	31.2%	4.04	19.86	297	7.2%	7.28	2,307	56.2%	30.15	42	1.0%
25-34	4,302	404	9.4%	14.68	36.33	1,561	36.3%	5.33	20.71	342	7.9%	7.94	1,937	45.0%	31.04	58	1.3%
35-44	1,909	236	12.4%	14.64	36.11	677	35.5%	6.07	21.05	195	10.2%	8.17	772	40.4%	31.50	29	1.5%
45-54	896	98	10.9%	17.19	42.70	314	35.0%	5.70	19.81	113	12.6%	7.01	354	39.5%	30.38	17	1.9%
55+	472	55	11.7%	16.06	39.36	134	28.4%	6.27	21.61	59	12.5%	7.48	221	46.8%	31.03	3	0.6%
Race																	
Black	6,237	520	8.3%	15.03	35.40	1,850	29.7%	4.89	20.18	645	10.3%	7.90	3,128	50.2%	30.56	94	1.5%
White	4,876	404	8.3%	14.80	36.29	1,910	39.2%	5.20	20.63	314	6.4%	7.08	2,196	45.0%	30.63	52	1.1%
Other	578	47	8.1%	16.96	45.11	208	36.0%	6.00	21.26	48	8.3%	8.08	272	47.1%	32.77	3	0.5%
Sex																	
Male	10,600	930	8.8%	14.97	36.36	3,655	34.5%	5.23	20.53	911	8.6%	7.72	4,976	46.9%	30.86	128	1.2%
Female	1,091	41	3.8%	16.43	33.37	313	28.7%	3.61	19.59	96	8.8%	7.00	620	56.8%	29.36	21	1.9%

Notes: Based on most serious offense in a criminal incident. Time in months. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. Data in this report are based upon the information reported to the Commission on Sentencing by county Courts of Common Pleas. The Commission relies upon the courts for the accuracy and completeness of the data.

April 17, 2026

Re: PA House Majority Policy Committee Hearing on Cannabis Clean Slate

Dear Chairman Bizarro and Members of the House Majority Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony for the record as part of the Committee's hearing on cannabis clean slate and the role of criminal justice reform within a comprehensive adult-use framework.

On behalf of Cresco Labs, a medical cannabis operator serving patients across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we appreciate the Committee's leadership in elevating this critical issue.

The Commonwealth's inaction regarding adult-use legislation imposes real and ongoing human costs. Pennsylvanians are regularly arrested and, in some cases, incarcerated for non-violent cannabis offenses, while this same conduct is legal just across state lines. Decades of evidence show that interactions with the criminal justice system can cause lasting harm that reverberates across generations. There is no defensible path forward in which Pennsylvania continues to criminalize individuals while others, including entrepreneurs, small businesses, farmers, and operators, are able to participate in and benefit from a legal marketplace elsewhere.

At the same time, as an operator deeply rooted in Pennsylvania, we see firsthand both the benefits of a well-regulated medical program and the consequences of continued inaction on adult-use legalization. While neighboring states have moved forward with adult-use frameworks, Pennsylvania continues to lag behind—losing out on jobs, tax revenue, and economic opportunity with each passing day.

For these reasons, any exploration of adult-use cannabis legalization must be firmly grounded in meaningful criminal justice reform. Cannabis clean slate policies are not ancillary—they are foundational.

That said, the General Assembly does not need to start from scratch. We have already seen strong, thoughtful proposals that address these challenges. House Bill 20 provides a bipartisan model for how to do this right. Its clean slate and reinvestment provisions would:

- **Automatically expunge** criminal records for non-violent cannabis offenses, including arrests, charges, and convictions related to conduct that would be legal under an adult-use framework.
- Establish a **streamlined, automatic process** requiring the Pennsylvania State Police, Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and courts of common pleas

to identify and clear eligible records within defined timelines—without requiring individuals to navigate burdensome petition processes.

- Create a pathway for **resentencing and sentence dismissal** for individuals currently incarcerated or serving sentences for cannabis-related offenses that would no longer be illegal, including those whose prior convictions enhanced subsequent sentences.
- Require the **immediate release of individuals** incarcerated solely for offenses that are expunged under the law.
- Provide for the **restoration of driving privileges** and the reinstatement of licenses or registrations that were suspended or revoked due to cannabis-related convictions.
- Dedicate **35% of cannabis tax revenue** to small business training, incubation, and technical assistance for entrepreneurs and social equity applicants, as well as to support indigent defense services—ensuring that communities most impacted by past enforcement have a meaningful opportunity to participate in and benefit from the legal marketplace.

These provisions recognize a simple but critical truth: legalization without equity is incomplete. By pairing adult-use legalization with automatic expungement, resentencing, and meaningful reinvestment in impacted communities, the House has an opportunity to correct past harms while building a more equitable and inclusive market.

Quite simply, the time for action is now. This issue has been discussed for years, yet arrests continue, and Pennsylvanians continue to bear the consequences of outdated policies. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth continues to fall behind as neighboring states capture economic growth and opportunity.

We commend the Committee for its leadership in advancing this conversation and respectfully urge you to continue prioritizing cannabis clean slate policies as part of a comprehensive approach to reform. Cresco Labs stands ready to serve as a resource and partner as you move this work forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record.

Respectfully,

Christian Ficara
Vice President, Government Affairs
Cresco Labs



Written Testimony in Support of Cannabis Clean Slate Legislation
Submitted to the Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee
Submitted by Meredith Buettner Schneider, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Cannabis Coalition

April 20, 2026

Chairman Bizzarro and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of comprehensive cannabis clean slate legislation. My name is Meredith Buettner Schneider, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Pennsylvania Cannabis Coalition.

The Pennsylvania Cannabis Coalition is a 501(c)6 trade organization comprised of Pennsylvania medical marijuana permit holders and industry partners. Our purpose is to protect and preserve Pennsylvania's emerging cannabis market. We help devise policy that regulates the sensible cultivation, distribution, and use of cannabis. We advocate for a robust yet economically sensible regulatory framework. We continue to educate elected officials, regulators, and the general public about the need and benefits of cannabis-derived therapies

Across Pennsylvania and the United States, cannabis prohibition has left a lasting legacy that continues to harm individuals, families, and communities long after any interaction with the justice system has ended. While public policy has begun to shift, the burden of past enforcement remains firmly in place for hundreds of thousands of people who carry criminal records for conduct that is increasingly treated as minor—or not criminal at all.

The scale of this issue is significant. Nationwide, more than 21 million people have been arrested for cannabis since 1995, and although arrest rates have declined, law enforcement still made more than 211,000 cannabis arrests in 2025 alone. These figures underscore that cannabis enforcement has been one of the most widespread points of contact between individuals and the criminal legal system.

Pennsylvania reflects this broader trend. Since 2013, law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth have made more than 253,000 cannabis-related arrests, including over 212,000 arrests for simple possession. In 2025 alone, there were more than 12,000 cannabis arrests, the majority for low-level offenses. These arrests continue despite growing public support for reform and ongoing legislative discussions about legalization.

The consequences of these arrests do not end when a case is closed. A criminal record—even for a minor cannabis offense—can create lasting barriers to employment, housing, education, and professional licensing. A criminal conviction can derail lives even absent incarceration, with many individuals reporting significant difficulty obtaining or maintaining employment due to their record. In practice, this means that a single low-level cannabis offense can limit opportunity for years, if not a lifetime.

Data from states that have legalized cannabis further reinforces this point. On average, states that have legalized cannabis have seen an 85% reduction in cannabis arrest rates, demonstrating that prohibition itself was a primary driver of these arrests. However, even in those states, thousands of individuals continue to be arrested each year, and many more continue to live with past convictions that limit their opportunities.

This is why cannabis clean slate legislation is essential.

A meaningful clean slate policy should include automatic expungement or record sealing for eligible cannabis offenses. Automatic relief is critical because petition-based systems place the burden on individuals to navigate complex, time-consuming, and often costly legal processes. Evidence from other states shows that when relief is not automatic, only a small percentage of eligible individuals are able to successfully clear their records.

In addition to automation, legislation should be broad in scope, covering possession and other low-level cannabis offenses that would no longer be prosecuted under current or anticipated law. It should also include clear timelines for implementation and ensure that individuals are notified when their records have been cleared.

Beyond fairness, clean slate legislation offers tangible economic benefits. By removing barriers to employment, it expands the workforce, increases earnings, and supports economic growth. Individuals who are able to secure stable employment are less likely to rely on public assistance and more likely to contribute to their communities and local economies.

Most importantly, cannabis clean slate legislation is about aligning our laws with our values. For decades, cannabis prohibition resulted in widespread arrests for conduct that posed little risk to public safety. Today, as policies evolve, it is both reasonable and necessary to ensure that those who were impacted by past enforcement are not permanently left behind.

Pennsylvania has been a national leader in clean slate policy. Expanding that leadership to include cannabis-related relief is a logical and necessary next step. Notably, Senate Bill 120 and House Bill 20, both currently before the General Assembly, include cannabis clean slate provisions, reflecting a growing bipartisan recognition that record-clearing must be part of any meaningful reform. This alignment makes it all the more urgent for the legislature to advance adult-use cannabis legislation without delay. By doing so, the Commonwealth can reduce future arrests, promote fairness, strengthen its workforce, and ensure that individuals impacted by prior cannabis convictions are not left behind as the legal landscape evolves.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meredith Buettner Schneider". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meredith Buettner Schneider, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Cannabis Coalition