



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 17-5656, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING HB2353 AND SB316 TO LEGALIZE AND REGULATE CANNABIS USE FOR ADULTS IN ILLINOIS

WHEREAS, in 2000, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) attempted to restate the goals of the “War on Drugs”: “to educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco; to increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence; to reduce health and social costs to the public of illegal drugs use; to shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat; and to break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply”; and

WHEREAS, despite spending more than \$1 Trillion over the last 40 years, the efforts of the “War on Drugs”, the health and social costs of drugs increase every year, drugs are no less available than before, and treatment is not available to the vast majority of people who need it; and

WHEREAS, there have been 1 million arrests for misdemeanor marijuana possession in the State of Illinois from 1975 to 2009 and in 2007, Illinois ranked sixth in the nation in per-capita marijuana arrest rates, representing 58 percent of all drug arrests in the state; and

WHEREAS, mirroring national trends, despite similar use rates among minorities and Caucasians throughout Illinois, non-whites are arrested at a higher rate than whites relative to their representation in the general population. Arrest data from 2007 reveals that racial disproportionality in drug arrests occurred in 62 of the 102 counties in Illinois, including urban, suburban, and rural areas and that most of the disproportionality in Illinois drug laws was related to drug possession charges, which accounted for nearly 75 percent of felony drug arrests across the state; and

WHEREAS, before marijuana possession was decriminalized, Chicago police made approximately 23,000 arrests a year for marijuana possession, an astounding 97 percent of charges involving 2.5 grams or less were dismissed between 2006 and 2010, creating nothing more than an unnecessary arrest record for some 20,000 individuals; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact that the City of Chicago decriminalized small amounts of marijuana possession 5 years ago and that the number of arrests for marijuana possession have dropped to their lowest level in years, police continue to make thousands of arrests for misdemeanor possession - more than for any other offense; and

WHEREAS, marijuana-related arrests in every Cook County municipality, including Chicago, result in staggering costs to Cook County government by virtue of the necessary involvement of the County jail, Sheriff's department, State's Attorney, Clerk of the Court, judiciary, and often times, the Public Defender, annually costing Cook County taxpayers tens of millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, most arrests for marijuana possession do not lead to trials or prison terms. Instead, a large number of these arrests are plea-bargained, continued without a finding, dismissed, or otherwise handled in a manner that places unnecessary burdens on already-limited criminal justice system resources; and

WHEREAS, arresting individuals for cannabis possession does nothing to reduce its use, rather it can often create barriers to living a normal life by negatively impacting public housing and student financial aid eligibility, employment

opportunities, child custody determinations, and immigration status, even if as is almost always the case, the charges are dismissed; and

WHEREAS, existing evidence from other states and countries show there is no indication that decriminalization of marijuana leads to a measurable increase in its use; and similar results have been found in states that have legalized marijuana; and

WHEREAS, a recent 2017 poll conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute finds that two-thirds of Illinois voters, support or strongly support legalization of recreational marijuana if it is taxed and regulated like alcohol, and in Chicago, 74 percent of voters support or strongly support legalization of marijuana while in suburban Cook and the collar counties support or strong support is at 70 percent; and

WHEREAS, as Illinois and Cook County continually face severe budget and financial constraints and lawmakers repeatedly face the undesirable choice of deciding between increasing taxes or substantial service cuts, or both, creating an intelligent, practical framework of cannabis legalization, regulation and taxation can help address a myriad of problems such as improved health and public safety, reduced criminal justice and jail costs, law enforcement efficacy, black market drug displacement as well as increased revenue for education and treatment protocols;

WHEREAS, Illinois State Representative Kelly Cassidy and State Senator Heather Steans have introduced bills in the General Assembly (HB2353/SB316), which seek to legalize, regulate and tax recreational marijuana use for adults 21 and over and would have an estimated revenue impact of \$350 to \$699 million at the state level and would also have a positive multi-million dollar impact for Cook County via sales tax proceeds and possibly excise tax revenue; and

WHEREAS, passage of this legislation would assist in the creation of a Cook County budget with a reduced reliance on new taxes, revenues or cuts to essential services, would lower the cost and burden on our criminal justice system and would additionally reduce unnecessary and unwarranted barriers to individuals seeking housing and employment among other items; and

WHEREAS, as taxpayers continue to be increasingly burdened by new or raised taxes, it is more important than ever that elected officials at every of government work to create a government that does more with less; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners support the efforts of Representative Cassidy and Senator Steans to legalize marijuana usage for adults in Illinois and does herby urge the Illinois General Assembly to consider HB2353/SB316 at the next session of the General Assembly in 2018; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of the Resolution be tendered to the sponsor of HB2353 and SB316 as well as the Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives and the President of the Illinois Senate.

Effective Date: This resolution shall be effective upon adoption.