

Letter: Norfolk makes right move on marijuana

January 6, 2019

Thank you to the Norfolk City Council for endorsing the decriminalization for possession of small amounts of marijuana in the 2019 legislative agenda.

Decriminalizing low-level marijuana offenses allows police and the courts to reprioritize their resources toward addressing more serious crimes. Minor marijuana possession offenders, many of them young people, should not be saddled with a criminal record and the lifelong penalties and stigma associated with it.

According to the latest drug spending report from the Cato Institute, Virginia spent \$81.2 million on marijuana enforcement in 2016. This year spending is projected to top \$100 million.

I urge all Virginians to support SB 997, to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana in Virginia. If passed, the bill would provide a civil penalty of no more than \$50 for a first violation, \$100 for a second violation and \$250 for a third or subsequent violation.

Polls repeatedly show that the overwhelming majority of Virginians support fines, not crimes, for simple marijuana possession. A 2018 Christopher Newport University Poll indicates a majority support across all polling demographics, including party, geographic region and age.

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Norfolk