



**Kentucky**

## **American for Prosperity calls on Kentucky to decriminalize marijuana possession**

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(The Center Square) A leading libertarian-conservative organization is calling on Kentucky to stop criminalizing the possession of “small amounts” of marijuana.

Americans for Prosperity-Kentucky released a position paper Tuesday that said pursuing criminal charges against those who use marijuana for recreational or medicinal purposes carries a significant cost.

AFP-KY’s paper cites a 2018 Cato Institute study that found the state spent \$56.8 million in enforcing and prosecuting marijuana crimes in 2016.

Despite that cost, AFP-KY said it has not had any impact on the use of marijuana by adults. However, it has led to local police shifting their focus away from other crimes. The organization noted arrests in violent crimes and property crimes are at historically low levels, 42% and 14%, respectively.

At the same time, the group reports that Kentucky is just one of 11 states that have not made any changes to its policies on marijuana use.

As Kentucky's policies remain the same, 27 states have already decriminalized possession to an extent, and 36 states have legalized some type of market for the product.

AFP-KY's paper also said there's "a growing body of research" showing marijuana can be an effective treatment for some medical conditions and it is not as dangerous as other drugs that are considered narcotics.

"As evidence continues to show marijuana can be an effective medical treatment and that it lacks many of the dangers associated with other drugs, it is time to join the majority of states who have already decriminalized the possession of this substance," AFP-KY State Director Michael Conway said in a statement. "By taking this step, our state can refocus law enforcement on its core mission – solving and preventing violent and property crime."

Two House lawmakers have filed bills already in the General Assembly session that would reform the state's marijuana laws.

State Rep. Jason Nemes, R-Louisville, filed **House Bill 136**, which would allow marijuana to be used for certain medicinal purposes. State Rep. Nima Kulkarni, D-Louisville, has filed two bills. One would decriminalize a "personal use quantity," which her **House Bill 224** defines as 1 ounce or less in a plant form, 5 grams or less in cannabis concentrates, products containing 1,000 or fewer milligrams of both delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol and delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol, or no more than five marijuana plants.

Kulkarni's **House Bill 225** calls for an amendment to the state constitution to allow adults 21 and older to possess, buy or sell up to 1 ounce of marijuana or tend to and harvest up to five plants for personal use.

AFP-KY supports both of Kulkarni's bills.

However, the proposals from both lawmakers likely face tremendous challenges in getting approved since social conservatives make up a significant portion of the Republican majorities in both chambers.