

SUPPORT HB 3447: REDUCING BARRIERS TO RECOVERY

House Bill 3447 would elevate a public health approach to reducing the harms associated with drug use, replacing the failed strategy of punishment and incarceration.

- HB 3447 reclassifies the penalty for possession of small amounts of drugs from a felony to a Class A misdemeanor, and offers real diversion in the form of behavioral health assessments and access to treatment for people who need it, rather than incarceration.
- A public health approach to drug use will have a real impact on lives in Illinois. From 2016 to 2018, 20,000 people in Illinois were convicted of felonies for possessing small amounts of drugs, and 7,500 were imprisoned.

HB 3447 (Ammons/Bush) would strengthen Illinois communities by:

 Enabling people arrested for possessing drugs to continue living and working in their communities, while connecting them to services they may need – adding to the economic vitality of neighborhoods across Illinois.

The current system of prosecuting drug possession as a felony has resulted in thousands of people from Waukegan to Cairo being limited in opportunities for education and employment. Our communities are stronger when everyone can participate.

 Addressing racial inequities in our criminal legal system.

While drug use is a reality in all communities, data shows that Illinois residents of color are much more likely to be arrested and convicted of drug possession. The result is that neighborhoods of color have been adversely impacted, with so many residents experiencing incarceration or the stigma of living with a felony record.

 Shifting resources away from the failed strategy of arrest and incarceration, and refocusing our resources on Illinoisans' real priorities.

If we reclassify low-level drug possession as a misdemeanor and utilize public health resources, we can allow police to spend more time focused on reducing the violence that remains too high across Illinois, and free up resources currently wasted on imprisonment to help people access health services in the communities where they live.

For more information, please contact:

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Supporting Organizations

ACLU of Illinois	Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV)
Adler University	Illinois Justice Project
AIDS Foundation Chicago	Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA)
Alliance for Safety and Justice	Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI)
Americans for Prosperity--Illinois	Illinois Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-IL)
Board of Health for the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District	Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA)
BPI Chicago	JOLT Harm Reduction
Broken No More	Lake County Sheriff's Office
Buddy's Purpose	Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)
Cabrini Green Legal Aid	Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender
Champaign County Sheriff's Office	League of Women Voters of Illinois
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District	Live4Lali
Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts	National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless	Peace and Justice Solutions
Chicago Community Bond Fund	The Perfectly Flawed Foundation
Chicago Recovery Alliance	Phoenix Center
Chicago Urban League	The Porchlight Collective, SAP
Clergy for a New Drug Policy	Revolution Workshop
Communities United	Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Cook County	Students for a Sensible Drug Policy
Cook County Department of Public Health	Target Area Development Corporation
Cook County Health	TASC, Inc.
Cook County State's Attorney	The Kennedy Forum Illinois
Communities United	Thresholds
Drug Policy Alliance	Transforming Reentry Services f/k/a Men & Women In Prison Ministries
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group	Women's Justice Institute
Heartland Alliance	Workers Center for Racial Justice
Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice	
Illinois Association for Behavioral Health (IABH)	