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