

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Association of Black Cannabis Lawyers Statement on DEA's Proposed Plan to Reschedule Cannabis

Advocacy Group Calls for Public to Voice Support for Full Cannabis Decriminalization During Comment Period

CHARLOTTE, N.C./WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 22, 2024) - The National Association of Black Cannabis Lawyers (NABCL) today issued the following statement from Founder and Executive Director Natacha Andrews, Esq., in response to President Biden's announcement regarding the move to reschedule cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III, and the opening of the 60-day public comment period:

"While we appreciate the administration's clear statement that we must reevaluate our outdated and inaccurate stance on cannabis, NABCL has significant concerns that merely rescheduling cannabis to Schedule III falls drastically short of the comprehensive decriminalization promised to American voters.

Rescheduling is an inadequate step that maintains the core injustices of federal criminalization. With cannabis as a Schedule III controlled substance, arrests, incarceration, and discriminatory policing practices for possession and distribution will persist. Without automatic release provisions, those currently incarcerated on cannabis related charges will remain behind bars. Many families will continue to face deportation risks from cannabis-related violations. Simply rescheduling will not aid the millions who will go on living without a restoration of rights such as public housing, food assistance or educational and employment opportunities that were stripped due to cannabis offenses.

Most critically, the disproportionate enforcement of cannabis policies that has trapped generations of Americans in a cycle of criminalization will remain fundamentally unaddressed and the harms created by the drug war will continue. This incremental approach to policy change represents an unacceptable continuation of systemic injustice with no true relief in sight.

Furthermore, rescheduling alone creates benefits for large corporate cannabis and pharmaceutical companies through tax incentives - but does not prioritize patients, or support a diverse workforce. It does nothing to improve affordable medical access, protect small businesses, ensure fair wages and working conditions, or mandate reinvestment into the communities ravaged by the drug enforcement policies fueled during prohibition.

The rescheduling review process itself is also flawed, ignoring the racist origins and discriminatory enforcement realities that has made criminalization so destructive. Developing new policies without fully reckoning with those harms is an unjustifiable abdication of responsibility.

Over the next 60 days during the public comment period, NABCL will help mobilize Americans - especially those harmed by discriminatory criminalization - to voice their support for full decriminalization and comprehensive legalization while rejecting attempts to reschedule without addressing the education, access and repair needs that are important to the majority of people in our nation. We call for reform that prioritizes equitable access, transparency and oversight, automatic expungements, removal of immigration consequences, resentencing

protocol, access for veterans, community reinvestment, and an inclusive regulatory framework to begin repairing generational injustices.

We urge President Biden to continue what he has started by honoring his decriminalization promise and supporting comprehensive reform that removes any doubt about the legalization of cannabis. Finally, we ask that in so doing, he take further action to ensure an end to the discriminatory harms of cannabis prohibition once and for all."

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About NABCL:

The National Association of Black Cannabis Lawyers is an advocacy organization, focused on helping to create a cannabis industry that is equitable, inclusive and reparative by supporting legal education, policy, advocacy and professional development. Learn more at www.nabcl.com.

About Natacha Andrews, Esq:

Andrews is a trailblazing cannabis attorney and advocate. As Founder/Executive Director of the National Association of Black Cannabis Lawyers (NABCL), she champions equitable policies and reparative justice in federal legislation. Andrews also teaches at Rutgers Law and is the CEO of Evergreen Solutions Group, a cannabis business consulting firm based in Charlotte, NC. Andrews draws from her previous immigration law experience, having witnessed the impact of the War on Drugs on immigrant families. A sought-after speaker and educator on drug policy reform, her work has been featured widely, amplifying diverse voices in the ethical cannabis movement.

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