



Contact: Erin Sogal
614-572-5297

For Immediate Release

PLSE Launches Online Petition Urging Mass Pardons for Pennsylvania Cannabis Convictions

Message to the Board of Pardons: “Let the Governor Decide!”

Philadelphia, PA – Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) and the Pardon Project Steering Committee (PPSC) have launched [an online petition asking for pardons for people convicted of nonviolent marijuana crimes](#).

On July 11, 2022, PLSE and the PPSC filed a [Petition for a General Pardon \(Amnesty\)](#) on behalf of 11 people across the commonwealth whose only crime was possessing, using, or delivering marijuana. That petition asks the Board of Pardons to first grant a hearing required by the state constitution, and the governor to subsequently pardon every nonviolent marijuana conviction in Pennsylvania by statute rather than individual applications.

“Reviewing the applications one by one by one is not only an administrative nightmare,” said Taylor Pacheco, PLSE’s Deputy Director. “It also fails to acknowledge our government’s responsibility to clean up its mess and repair the damage caused by the war on drugs.”

In the last ten years alone, there were [65,527 new marijuana convictions in Pennsylvania that did not involve a crime of violence](#). Yet as of August 23, 2022 (the most recent update provided by the Board of Pardons), the Board had recommended [just 373 to the Governor](#).

“There are tens of thousands of marijuana convictions in Pennsylvania, every last one of them with the potential to limit jobs, credit, reputations, and lives,” added Renee Chenault Fattah, PLSE’s Executive Director.

Since the Petition for a General Pardon was delivered to the Board of Pardons and Governor more than five months ago, no reason has been provided as to why the petition has not been scheduled for a public hearing, a necessary step before the petition can be reviewed for its merits.

In addition to the three elected members – the Governor, the Attorney General, and the Lieutenant Governor – overseeing the clemency system, the Board of Pardons also includes three appointed members: Harris Gubernick, Dr. John Williams, and Marsha Grayson.

“Today we are urging the Board of Pardons to hear the call of all of those who support marijuana decriminalization,” said Pacheco, “and we are asking them to restore opportunities and hope to our communities: let the governor decide!”

About Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity: Mass incarceration has resulted in hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians having criminal records that hurt them, their families and neighborhoods for generations. We all should want to help our neighbors get the second chances they have earned, and we can! PLSE works to uplift communities most affected by social justice inequities by providing assistance to neighborhood organizations and individuals who feel that their criminal record is blocking them from jobs, careers, education, credit, housing and other opportunities. For more information about Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, please visit www.plsephilly.org

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