



Legislation Text

File #: RES. 2021-R021, **Version:** 1

To declare vigorous support for and urge the General Assembly promptly to approve amendments recommended by the Governor to legislation legalizing the simple possession of up to one ounce of marijuana that are intended to promote equity for Richmond residents and other Virginia citizens disproportionately affected by the enforcement of laws prohibiting marijuana possession.

WHEREAS, House Bill 2312 and Senate Bill 1406 (the “Legislation”) as passed by the 2021 General Assembly of Virginia (the “General Assembly”) during its Special Session I would legalize the simple possession of certain amounts of marijuana; establish a Cannabis Equity Reinvestment Board and a Cannabis Equity Reinvestment Fund to directly address the impact of economic disinvestment, violence, and historical overuse of criminal justice responses to community and individual needs by providing resources to support local design and control of community-based responses to such impacts; and make other changes to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia intended to alleviate the historical disproportionate impact of the enforcement of marijuana possession laws; and

WHEREAS, prompted by findings such as those of a November 16, 2020, report of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission showing racial disparities in marijuana law enforcement in every Virginia locality where there was sufficient data to make an assessment, the Governor of Virginia (the “Governor”) has recommended amendments to the Legislation as passed by the General Assembly to (i) allow adults to legally possess up to one ounce of cannabis, without intent to distribute, beginning July 1, 2021, (ii) allow for expungement and sealing of criminal records on marijuana to begin as soon as state agencies are able to do so, and (iii) simplify the criteria for when such records can be sealed, among other changes intended to increase the Legislation’s equitable impact on disproportionately affected members of racial and language minority groups and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities in the city of Richmond and around the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the residents of the city of Richmond that the Council of the City of Richmond vigorously support, and urge that the General Assembly promptly approve, these amendments recommended

by the Governor, which are intended to promote equity for Richmond residents and other citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia disproportionately affected by the enforcement of laws prohibiting marijuana possession;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby declares its vigorous support for, and urges that the General Assembly promptly approve, amendments recommended by the Governor to the Legislation that are intended to promote equity for Richmond residents and other citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia disproportionately affected by the enforcement of laws prohibiting marijuana possession.