

SUPPORT HB 3447: REDUCING BARRIERS TO RECOVERY

House Bill 3447 would strengthen communities across Illinois by elevating 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-Slaughter-Cassidy) would:

- ✓ **Enable people arrested for low-level drug possession 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.

- ✓ **Address racial inequities in our criminal justice 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.

- ✓ **Shift resources from the failed strategy of arrest and incarceration, and refocus 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	Heartland Alliance
Adler University	Illinois Association for Behavioral Health (IABH)
AIDS Foundation Chicago	Illinois Justice Project
Board of Health for the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District	Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA)
BPI Chicago	Illinois Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-IL)
Buddy's Purpose	Illinois State Bar Association
Cabrini Green Legal Aid	Lake County Sheriff's Office
Champaign County Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District	Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender
Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts	League of Women Voters of Illinois
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless	Live4Lali
Chicago Community Bond Fund	Perfectly Flawed Foundation
Chicago Recovery Alliance	Revolution Workshop
Chicago Urban League	Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Clergy for a New Drug Policy	Students for a Sensible Drug Policy
Coalition for Peace and Justice	Target Area Development Corporation
Communities United	TASC, Inc.
Cook County	The Kennedy Forum Illinois
Cook County Department of Public Health	Thresholds
Cook County Health	Transforming Reentry Services f/k/a Men & Women In Prison Ministries
Cook County State's Attorney	Women's Justice Institute
Communities United	Workers Center for Racial Justice
Dusty Roads	
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group	