

Dear Representative/Senator,

I am asking you to support House Bill 548, which will reduce possession of 1 ounce or less of marijuana from a Class B misdemeanor (punishable by up to six months in county jail and a fine of up to \$2,000) to a Class C misdemeanor (punishable by a fine of up to \$500). HB 548 would significantly reduce law enforcement and socioeconomic cost of arresting people for simple possession of marijuana and tagging them with a criminal record.

Texas should not be spending \$600-700 million annually on the enforcement of a marijuana market ban that serves to protect alcohol industry profits while inflicting tremendous pain and suffering on the most vulnerable in our society.

According to a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse: "Alcohol abuse is often a contributing factor in incest, child molestation, spouse abuse, and family violence."

Every objective study on marijuana has concluded that it is far less harmful than alcohol both to the user and to society. For more information on the relative harms of alcohol and marijuana, visit <http://safertexas.org/getthefacts.html>

Our marijuana laws tragically impact families in other ways. I am also asking you to support HB 1491, which would simply allow seriously ill patients to raise a medical necessity defense to charges of possessing marijuana for medical use. If arrested for possession of marijuana, a patient with a recommendation from his or her physician would have an affirmative defense in court to charges arising from his or her medical use of marijuana. If a court accepts such an affirmative defense, a patient could avoid jail time and fines.

HB 548 and 1491 are a small step in the right direction but will still leave intact the dangerous message to our society that alcohol is more acceptable than marijuana, perpetuating a "culture of alcohol" in our communities. Therefore, please demonstrate your commitment to future marijuana policy reform by abstaining from alcohol industry campaign money until the marijuana market is regulated in a manner similar to alcohol. Please encourage your colleagues in the State Legislature to take the same stand.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]