

Pritzker Administration Announces Nearly 500,000 Cannabis Arrest Records to be Expunged Four Years Ahead of Schedule

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CHICAGO – Today, Governor JB Pritzker announced 492,129 thousand non-felony cannabis related arrest records have been expunged at the state level by the Illinois State Police (ISP). The milestone announcement comes four years in advance of the deadline set in the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (CRTA), the most equity-centric cannabis

legislation in the country signed into law by Governor Pritzker in 2019. Additionally, the Governor today issued pardons for 9,219 low-level cannabis conviction records, for a total of over 20,000 cannabis convictions now pardoned since the signing of the legislation.

“Statewide, Illinoisans hold hundreds of thousands low-level cannabis-related records, a burden disproportionately shouldered by communities of color,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “We will never be able to fully remedy the depth of that damage. But we can govern with the courage to admit the mistakes of our past—and the decency to set a better path forward. I applaud the Prisoner Review Board, the Illinois State Police, and our partners across the state for their extraordinary efforts that allowed these pardons and expungements to become a reality.”

The CRTA requires cannabis-related arrest records created between 2013 and 2019 be expunged by January 1, 2021, a total of 47,000 records. With the expungement of all 492,129 cannabis arrest records, ISP is four years ahead of the January 1, 2025 statutory deadline for completing automatic expungements. While the expungement process has been completed at the state level, county clerks are still processing expungements at the local level. Arrest records from DuPage, Kane, Knox, Lake, McHenry, McLean, Peoria, Rock Island, Will, and Winnebago Counties have been expunged at the local level. The remaining counties have until January 1, 2025 to expunge their arrest records.

“As we near the end of the first year of Illinois’ new legal cannabis industry, I am heartened by the progress we have made towards undoing the harms dealt by the failed war on drugs. Eleven states in the nation have legalized cannabis for recreational use, but no other state has done the important work we’re doing here in Illinois, where equity intentionality takes center stage,” said Toi Hutchinson, Senior Advisor to the Governor on Cannabis Control. “We are one year into what will be an ongoing effort to correct historic wrongdoings. The administration remains committed to working with legislators to address any challenges to equity and on building an industry that re-invests in our state’s communities.”

The administration remains committed to upholding the intention of the law and ensuring the cannabis industry is equitable for all Illinois residents, regardless of background. Under the law, 25% of revenues collected from recreational cannabis sales will be directed to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the justice system through the Restore, Reinvest and Renew (R3) Program. In the coming weeks, the innovative R3 program will grant over \$25 million in funding to organizations working in historically underserved communities across Illinois.

“The public servants of the Illinois State Police Division of Justice Services have worked diligently on the expungement process for thousands of eligible records across

the state,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “We will continue to work closely with the Governor in the years ahead to implement this new law.”

“The Prisoner Review Board is proud to stand with the Governor in this historic effort to restore the rights of thousands of Illinoisans. During the upcoming year, the Board expects to review thousands of additional felony and misdemeanor Minor Cannabis Offense convictions. We appreciate the partnership shown by the Attorney General’s Office, the Clerks of the Circuit Courts, and State’s Attorneys throughout Illinois,” said Craig Findley, Chair of Illinois Prisoner Review Board.

“Dismantling decades' worth of criminal justice atrocities will take years. That’s evidenced by how this country handles cannabis,” said Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford (D- 4th District). “We must never stop chipping away at that painful history. I’m proud of these critical first steps.”

“Having spent the last five years working with people in my community who know firsthand the collateral consequences that an arrest or conviction will bring, I am incredibly proud to have been a part of the negotiating team that fought hard for the criminal justice reforms in the CRTA,” said Deputy Majority Leader Jehan Gordon-Booth (D –92ndDistrict). “We in the legislature should be pleased with these critical first steps in writing the wrongs of the past so that our people are no longer calcified in poverty based on cannabis convictions.”

“We must ensure that the benefits of the new cannabis industry are experienced equally in every community across Illinois,” said Senator Heather Steans (D- 7th District). “I applaud Governor Pritzker and his administration for their continued commitment to equity and their diligence in expunging thousands of arrest records at the state level.”

“While we have a long road to an equitable recovery from decades of an unjust criminal system, these efforts will take us a step towards healing our communities,” said State Representative Sonya Harper (D-6th District). “I stay committed to continue the work with my colleagues to ensure that Illinois leads a cannabis industry that offers equity and justice to communities of color.”

In addition to conducting a disparity study and providing financial support to organizations offering services in disproportionately impacted communities, the administration offered lower application fees, low-interest loans, and informational workshops on cannabis-related licenses to social equity applicants. Governor Pritzker continues to work with State’s Attorney Kim Foxx, the Prisoner Review Board, and state’s attorneys across Illinois to expunge additional records of non-violent offenders with a cannabis related conviction.

For more information on the adult-use legal cannabis industry, go to <https://www2.illinois.gov/cannabis/Pages/default.aspx>.