



# #HandsOffDC

# LET D.C. FINALLY CREATE A LEGAL MARKET FOR RECREATIONAL CANNABIS

In 2014, the people of D.C. passed [Initiative 71](#), legalizing the adult possession and use of small amounts of recreational marijuana in the District. But almost a decade later, D.C. still does not have a regulatory scheme for buying and selling cannabis legally, outside of medical purposes.

[Twenty states](#) have legalized recreational cannabis in some form. D.C. is the only jurisdiction where Congress has interfered, preventing the District from creating the regulations required for a legal marketplace. The [Harris Rider](#), initially introduced by Congressman Andy Harris (R, MD-01), blocks D.C. from launching legal and regulated adult recreational cannabis sales.

*"No funds available for obligation or expenditure by the District of Columbia government under any authority may be used to enact any law, rule, or regulation to legalize or otherwise reduce penalties associated with the possession, use, or distribution of any schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 801 et seq.) or any tetrahydrocannabinols derivative for recreational purposes."*

[Harris Rider language from 116th Congress appropriations bill, Section 809 \(b\)](#)

The Harris Rider is a racial and economic justice issue. Because of this rider, D.C. is experiencing a large, unregulated "[gray market](#)" of cannabis sales in D.C. – something that decreases our safety. [This rider means Black people are still disproportionately arrested on marijuana-related charges](#). The Harris Rider also means that D.C. cannot benefit from the employment, and the millions of taxpayer dollars, that would come with a regulated recreational cannabis industry.

This year, we ask Congress to take its [hands off D.C.](#) and prevent the Harris Rider from inclusion in the FY24 appropriations bill.

## ABOUT DC JUSTICE LAB

DC Justice Lab is a team of law and policy experts researching, organizing, and advocating for large-scale changes to the District of Columbia's criminal legal system. We develop smarter safety solutions that are evidence-driven, community-rooted, and racially just. We aim to fully transform the District's approach to public safety and make it a national leader in justice reform.

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