AM17-3 Maryland Governor’s Mass Pardon

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Maryland Governor To Pardon 175,000 Marijuana Convictions: Report (Barrons)

Maryland Governor to Issue Mass Pardon for Drug Offenses

**MARYLAND, USA:** Maryland's governor, Wes Moore, will issue a mass pardon for drug offenses, US media reported Sunday. This far-reaching move will forgive 175,000 low-level marijuana convictions spanning multiple decades.

The Washington Post described this act as one of the country's most sweeping clemency efforts involving marijuana, now broadly used for recreational purposes. The action targets social and economic injustices disproportionately affecting Black people.

Wes Moore, Maryland's first Black governor, expressed his intent to "right a lot of historical wrongs" through this pardon order, set to be implemented early Monday. He stated that the scope of the pardons—impacting around 100,000 individuals—represents "the most far-reaching and aggressive" executive action by officials nationwide to address criminal justice inequities as more states ease marijuana laws.

Following a statewide referendum, Maryland legalized cannabis for adults and began retail sales of the drug in 2023. Governor Moore emphasized that creating inclusive economic growth requires removing barriers that disproportionately affect communities of color. He noted that criminal records have hindered individuals from obtaining employment, education, and housing long after serving their sentences.

Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown stated that the pardons will cover anyone with a misdemeanor conviction for marijuana possession or paraphernalia. He highlighted that this clemency "disproportionately impacts—in a good way—Black and Brown Marylanders."

Maryland, with a population of six million, is 33 percent Black. However, more than 70 percent of the state's male incarcerated population is Black, according to state data cited by the Post. The American Civil Liberties Union reports that Black people are over three times more likely than white people to be arrested for marijuana possession.

Governor Moore's decision reflects a significant step towards addressing the systemic inequities in the criminal justice system. By removing the long-term consequences of these convictions, the state aims to provide a more equitable future for its residents, particularly those from marginalized communities.

**Maryland,** Governor, Mass Pardon, Drug, Offenses