

# Last Prisoner Project Applauds Passage of Virginia Marijuana Resentencing Bill

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*Stephanie Shepard, Executive Director, Last Prisoner Project*

national nonprofit dedicated to freeing people incarcerated for cannabis offenses, applauds the Virginia General Assembly’s passage of landmark marijuana resentencing legislation that provides long-awaited relief to individuals serving outdated cannabis sentences.

The new law guarantees automatic court hearings for eligible marijuana convictions, empowers judges to reduce or modify sentences that no longer reflect current law, and extends relief to people who are still incarcerated, under supervision, or adjudicated as juveniles.

“Virginia has a chance to right a wrong and bring people home,” said Stephanie Shepard, Executive Director of Last Prisoner Project. “I served nine years in federal prison for a first-time, nonviolent cannabis offense. I missed birthdays, holidays, and everyday moments with the people I love. No family should lose years together over conduct that is now legal in much of the country. This legislation recognizes that justice requires more than changing the law going forward. It requires correcting the harm that was already done. Automatic hearings mean people finally have a real opportunity to be seen, heard, and brought home.”

Under the resentencing framework approved by the General Assembly, eligible individuals with cannabis-related convictions can receive a court hearing to consider sentence modification. Depending on the circumstances, a court may suspend the unserved portion of a sentence, adjust how remaining time is served, place an individual on probation, or otherwise modify the sentence for eligible cannabis-related offenses.

The legislation also expands who can qualify for relief, including certain individuals adjudicated as juveniles and people who remain under state supervision. Last year, Virginia lawmakers advanced legislation focused on clearing criminal records, streamlining state-initiated expungements and sealing certain ancillary records tied to cannabis charges and arrests.

In 2025, Governor Glenn Youngkin vetoed an LPP-designed sentence-modification bill. The veto denied relief and potential freedom to more than 1,844 people still incarcerated under state supervision for cannabis-related offenses. LPP has provided testimony and technical feedback on prior iterations of the legislation and worked with legislators to keep this important reform on the agenda each year.

Virginia's legislative session ends March 14, and the governor's veto and amendment deadline is April 13. Virginia is a default-into-law state, meaning the legislation will become law if the governor takes no action.

LPP thanks partner organizations and key assembly members involved in passing this legislation, including: Marijuana Justice Virginia, NoLef Turns, Justice Forward Virginia, Senators Louise Lucas, Emily Jordan, Scott Surovell, and Angelia Williams Graves, and Delegate Rozia Henson, Jr.

LPP applauds the General Assembly for advancing these reforms.

#### ABOUT LAST PRISONER PROJECT

Last Prisoner Project is dedicated to freeing those incarcerated due to the War on Drugs, reuniting families, and helping them rebuild their lives. As laws change, there remains a fundamental injustice for individuals whose convictions are no longer crimes. LPP works to address these harms through legal intervention, constituent support, direct advocacy, and policy change.

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