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**REACTIONS TO MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER BRATTON'S
ANNOUNCEMENT OF POLICY CHANGE TO REDUCE MARIJUANA POSSESSION
ARRESTS**

New citywide policy makes 'open to public view' possession of small amounts of marijuana a violation subject to fine

NEW YORK—The de Blasio administration today announced changes to the New York Police Department's policy on marijuana possession arrests. Effective November 19, if police find someone in possession of 25 grams or less of marijuana, officers will issue a summons instead of effecting an arrest, so long as there is no warrant for the individual's arrest and the person has identification. Police will be authorized to make arrests if the marijuana is burning, if the type of possession indicates intent to sell, if the individual has an outstanding warrant, or if the individual is in a location with special consideration, like a school.

"The Mayor's decision today is a big deal to undo a glaring injustice. It is an important acknowledgement that you shouldn't be able to predict who will be charged with a crime based on race and ethnicity," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "Today also shows the need to change state law to ensure fairness. I commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton for this bold step."

"I want to commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton for this wise and overdue policy change. This new policy is a win-win for the city and the people of New York. In minority communities like the one I represent, our young people are disproportionately affected by criminal charges for small infractions. With this decriminalization, we give our children an opportunity to change their lives for the positive without the shadow of a criminal record. Moreover, it will lessen the congestion in our court systems and can generate revenue through summonses, which can and should be used to educate and combat serious substance abuse issues in our city," said **Member of Assembly Maritza Davila**.

"As young men of color, we represent the demographic most directly affected by the NYPD's racially skewed marijuana arrest record, and in a letter sent to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton on Oct. 31, we collectively called for an end to such arrests. We thank the Mayor and Commissioner for responding with today's announcement. By implementing a new

policy of issuing a summons rather than arresting New Yorkers for possessing small amounts of marijuana, the Mayor and Commissioner have taken a significant step towards ensuring fewer New Yorkers face the consequences that arrest records bring. We commend the Mayor and Commissioner for this move, and we will continue to monitor its implementation. The relationship between police and communities, particularly communities of color, frayed significantly during the previous administration. Today's announcement will make substantial progress towards rebuilding that relationship. We look forward to working with the Mayor and Commissioner to implement additional measures needed to restore trust between police and communities," said **Council Members Ritchie Torres, Rafael Espinal, Carlos Menchaca, Antonio Reynoso, and Donovan Richards** in a joint statement.

"This shift in policy is a step in the right direction toward improving community/police relations. It has the potential to make a big difference in the lives of young people of color in this city. I'm happy to see the administration proactively addressing these issues," said **Council Member Antonio Reynoso**.

"I commend Mayor de Blasio on the changes announced on low level marijuana possession. Every year, thousands of young people in New York get arrested for possessing small amounts of marijuana, a practice that floods our city jails, tarnishes their records, and can have devastating effects on their lives. This is an important first step toward reforming police practices that unfairly target young people of color in New York. I hope to see a similar policy shift at the state level," said **Council Member Rafael Espinal**.

"Today's announcement to reduce arrests for low-level marijuana possession is a welcome policy change. Historically, these types of arrests have disproportionately targeted poorer, young men of color. Rethinking the administration's approach to marijuana possession is a key to ending the misguided reliance on 'stop and frisk' and rebuilding the relationships between law enforcement, and the communities they police," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**.

"I applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio and Police Commissioner Bill Bratton on today's announcement regarding changes to the department's marijuana possession arrests. This is a critical first step to address systemic patterns of minority youth being arrested and led into the criminal justice system. The process of addressing marijuana reform is long and challenging, however I look forward to working with the Mayor, Commissioner, and all stakeholders to address the concerns that have been raised, in order to establish reforms that are fair and just for all New Yorkers," said **Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Chair of the Public Safety Committee**.

"Over-criminalizing low level marijuana possession clogs our courts and strains our city's taxpayer-funded legal services budget. Today's announcement by Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Bill Bratton will free our prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys to concentrate on keeping us safe from violent crimes. I look forward to further reducing the over-policing in communities of color, and addressing the collateral consequences of even mere violations for undocumented immigrants caught in the criminal justice system," said **Council Member Rory I. Lancman, Chair, Committee on Courts & Legal Services**.

“The de Blasio administration is keeping its promise of instituting level-handed justice in New York City. This policy change is one of many steps towards rebuilding those communities of color, like my own, that have been disproportionately jailed and suffered in the long-term; it reflects the progressive, forward-thinking direction in which our City and this Council are moving,” said **Council Member Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Finance Committee.**

“More than two years ago, I supported a change in state law that would make possession of a small amount of marijuana, even if in public view, a violation, rather than a misdemeanor. I still support a change in legislation. Short of that, this policy—by diverting thousands of cases from criminal court—will also keep low-level offenders, particularly teens, from an arrest and all its attendant consequences, including a night or more in jail. I would like to commend Mayor de Blasio and Police Commissioner Bratton for this initiative, which will enhance fairness without sacrificing public safety, and is simply the right thing to do,” said **Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr.**

“The NYPD has made a policy determination to issue summonses to those possessing small amounts of marijuana. This should free up police manpower to pursue cases of greater magnitude, while relieving some of the congestion in the courts. My office will continue, through the work of the NYPD and my own investigative squads, to investigate and prosecute cases of larger scale possession and sales of marijuana,” said **Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.**

“The Crime Commission applauds this move by the NYPD to handle low-level marijuana possession cases with a summons rather than an arrest. Low-level marijuana arrests often lead to life-crippling convictions for otherwise law-abiding New Yorkers—and the practice disproportionately affects young men of color. These arrests also divert the time and attention of police—and the resources of our courts—away from more serious criminal justice work. By more appropriately ticketing New Yorkers found with a small amount of marijuana, the NYPD will empower police with more discretion on the street, save countless New Yorkers from potentially dooming and unnecessary arrest records, and significantly improve community relations in neighborhoods disturbed by a high number of these arrests,” said **Richard Aborn, President, Citizens Crime Commission of New York City.**

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