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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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For More Information:

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Ford Supports Decriminalizing Marijuana, Pushes Fines to Increase Funding for More Police

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – To help curb violence in Chicago and provide a more appropriate penalty for minor marijuana offenses, state Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, has sponsored legislation to decriminalize marijuana in Illinois.

“Locking people in jails and prisons is not the solution to the drug problem in our communities and will not make our streets safer or less violent,” Ford said. “Low-level marijuana possession cases are taking up valuable resources that are needed to protect our streets from violent criminals that threaten the safety of our neighborhoods. Additionally, African Americans are arrested at a much higher rate than other groups for possession of cannabis, and it’s our responsibility as legislators to ensure fair and just policies that protect all residents rather than target some of them.”

According to the NAACP, African Americans represent 12% of monthly drug users, but comprise 32% of persons arrested for drug possession.

Ford introduced House Bill 2332 to allow counties and municipalities to reduce possession of 15 grams or less of cannabis down to a petty offense and aims to provide additional funding for more police. Ford’s bill allows funding generated by the fines collected from cannabis possession violations to go to municipalities, providing more local funding that could be used to hire police officers. Ford also believes that law abiding citizens shouldn’t be forced to cover the cost of added police presence because of the actions of offenders. This bill would allow people that violate the law to pay a fairer share of the cost to hire more officers.

“We have to reevaluate the impact that that our laws are having and provide rehabilitation resources for people that are struggling with addiction rather than criminalizing them,” Ford said. “Convictions can prevent otherwise productive citizens from obtaining employment, leading them to commit more serious crimes out of desperation. I urge my colleagues in the House to support decriminalizing low-level marijuana possession, and I want to work with all sides of this issue to help provide real solutions to crime.”

For more information, please contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at 773-378-5902 or 239-E Stratton Office Building in Springfield at 217-782-5962.

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