

For Immediate Release
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DELEGATE STEVE HERETICK CALLS ON FELLOW DEMOCRATS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION BY THE END OF 2021.

PORTSMOUTH, VA- Delegate Steve Heretick joined calls today encouraging Governor Northam's administration to enact legalization of marijuana by the end of 2021. The Governor is expected to make recommendations in the coming days on legislation passed by the General Assembly earlier this year that would legalize adult consumption, but makes no provisions for legal distribution until 2024.

Delegate Heretick has been a leader on decriminalizing and legalizing adult marijuana use since first being elected to the House in 2016. He was the first Delegate to introduce such legislation, and has continued to champion the issue. Earlier this year, Delegate Heretick introduced House Bill 1815 (HB1815), which would have placed regulation of marijuana licensure with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). VDACS currently regulates the medical marijuana and industrial hemp cultivation markets, and he urges the Governor to answer this call for accelerating legalization by adopting that plan.

"There is no reason we cannot move forward *this year* with legalization and regulation of adult-use recreational marijuana," said Delegate Heretick. "We have a state agency that has a proven track record of diversity, inclusion, and fairness dealing with small businesses and farms that is already successfully regulating the medical marijuana and industrial hemp markets. There is no reason for even one more Virginian to be unfairly penalized for something we have already decided to overturn, when we have an agency that is already prepared to oversee this process *now*."

Delegate Heretick's most recent legalization bill, HB1815, was rolled into another bill (HB2312) which passed the General Assembly and is now awaiting recommended changes from Governor Northam. The Governor's amendments to the bill will be considered during the reconvened session of the General Assembly scheduled for April 7th.

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The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) currently regulates licensing for industrial hemp cultivation and the medical marijuana industry.

Democrat Delegate Stephen E. "Steve" Heretick represents the 79th District of the Virginia House of Delegates which includes parts of the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Portsmouth. He was first elected to the General Assembly in 2015. Since taking office in 2016, Delegate Heretick has introduced 11 marijuana related bills, including 3 bills setting up legalization and regulation of adult-use recreational marijuana.