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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fresh Leaf Maryland Launches Statewide Campaign to Encourage Expungement of Cannabis-Related Records

Maryland – September 3, 2024 – Fresh Leaf Maryland is excited to announce the launch of a statewide media campaign to inform Marylanders about new laws allowing for the expungement of almost all cannabis possession criminal records in the state and to encourage individuals to expunge cannabis possession arrests, charges, and convictions with assistance from free and low-cost legal aid services.

New Laws Offer Fresh Start for Many Marylanders

Governor Wes Moore’s mass pardon of low-level marijuana convictions is a crucial step toward addressing the injustices of cannabis criminalization. However, many are unaware that pardons alone do not remove cannabis-related arrests, charges, or convictions from public records. Expungement is essential for ensuring that these records don’t hinder future opportunities. Even those who have received pardons can benefit significantly from expungement, as it shields records from public view, allowing for greater access to employment, housing, and other life opportunities.

Lauren Pruitt, Legal Director of FreeState Justice, emphasizes, “For decades, unjust cannabis laws have disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities in Maryland and have contributed to the over-policing of these populations in the state.

Cannabis expungement provides an opportunity for individuals who have been penalized under outdated cannabis laws to clear their records.”

Through various channels, including TV, radio, billboards, social/digital media, and more, this campaign aims to raise awareness about the benefits of expungement and connect Marylanders to legal aid and resources to assist in the process.

“The statewide campaign launched by Fresh Leaf Maryland is a significant step towards justice and equity. The collaboration among legal services organizations across Maryland exemplifies the power of unity and shared purpose in driving meaningful change. By facilitating the expungement of cannabis-related records, we affirm that past convictions should not hinder future opportunities.” says Kirsten Gettys Downs, Executive Director of the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP).

New Website Offers Information and Connections to Free Legal Services

All Marylanders are invited to learn more about cannabis possession records expungement and the campaign by visiting www.freshleafmd.org, where they can also connect with free legal aid services to help with the expungement process from start to finish.

About Fresh Leaf Maryland

Fresh Leaf Maryland is a collaboration between legal services agencies throughout Maryland, made possible by funding from Maryland Legal Services Corporation. It was founded to educate Marylanders about their rights under new cannabis laws, connecting individuals to effective legal services and empowering them to expunge cannabis possession arrests, charges, and convictions from their criminal records. The coalition includes the Homeless Persons Representation Project, Shore Legal Access, FreeState Justice, Maryland Legal Aid, Community Legal Services of Prince George’s County, Harford County Bar Foundation, Allegany Law Foundation and Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.

