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Supervisor Ortiz-Velez Introduces Proposal Reducing Penalty for Marijuana Possession

MILWAUKEE – Supervisor Sylvia Ortiz-Velez recently introduced a resolution that would reduce the fine for marijuana possession, and possession and delivery of drug paraphernalia within Milwaukee County to no more than $1.

> *"For too long, Wisconsinites have watched their midwestern neighbors in Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota benefit from progressive legislation that decriminalizes and legalizes medical and recreational marijuana while we continue to live in the past," said Supervisor Ortiz-Velez. "Neighboring states have enjoyed increased tax revenue and tourism dollars as people in Milwaukee County have been hit with hefty fines and jail time for possessing small amounts of the marijuana."*

Current Milwaukee County ordinance sets the fine for marijuana possession as not less than $250 nor more than $500.

An April 2020 American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) study found that African Americans nationwide are nearly four times more likely than white people to be arrested for marijuana possession, despite similar usage rates.

> *"Marijuana laws from the federal to the local level have had a disproportionately negative affect on communities of color," said Supervisor Ortiz-Velez. "This resolution is a major step towards racial equity in Milwaukee County as it eliminates part of the financial hardship that has adversely affected Black and Brown people arrested for possessing small amounts of marijuana."*

The resolution would only apply to Chapter 24 of Milwaukee County ordinance, which is reserved for violations of 25 grams or less of marijuana. Law enforcement would still be able to issue State citations, if needed, for possession of larger amounts.

Supervisors Ryan Clancy, Steven Shea, Sequanna Taylor, Joseph J. Czarnezki, Willie Johnson Jr., Liz Sumner and Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson are co-sponsors of the resolution.

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