

LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS

Resolution LJE-17-25

A RESOLUTION CALLING ON STATES TO ACT ON DRUG SENTENCING REFORM

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) recognizes the need to lessen prison sentencing for non-violent drug offenders who are in more need of rehabilitation and treatment than lengthy prison sentences;

WHEREAS, there has been a poor distinction between addicts and drug traffickers as it relates to sentencing;

WHEREAS, the United States has an extremely high incarceration rate which has resulted in the overcrowding of prisons as a million people each year are arrested for drug possession alone;

WHEREAS, African Americans and Latinos comprise 57 percent of those incarcerated in state prisons for drug offenses while drug use is roughly the same among racial groups;

WHEREAS, despite overall decreasing crime rates we have a significant growth in incarceration rates;

WHEREAS, the proportion of state inmates incarcerated for drug offenses rose from six percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 2011;

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Fair Sentencing Act in 2010 closing the sentencing disparity between offenses for crack and powder cocaine, from 100:1 to 18:1; and

WHEREAS, State and local governments spend approximately \$25 billion on arrests, prosecutions, and incarcerations of drug offenders every year.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) encourages legislation that will reduce the sentencing of non-violent drug offenders;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL urges its legislators and community to research and explore expanding drug treatment and alternatives to incarceration;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL encourages legislators to address drug use and abuse not solely through the criminal justice system but with the use of public and mental health assistance; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

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SPONSOR: Senator Jeff Hayden (MN)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Law, Justice, and Ethics Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chair: Representative Reginald Meeks (KY)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 3, 2016

Ratification is certified by: Senator Catherine Pugh (MD), President