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On Tuesday, Feb. 11, the majority of members of the Virginia State Senate voted in favor of decriminalizing marijuana possession 27-13. The original bill, created by Delegate Charniele Herring, titled [HB 972 Marijuana; possession and consumption, penalty](#), passed the Virginia House on Monday.

As defined on [drugpolicy.org](http://drugpolicy.org), decriminalization means that "... nobody gets arrested, goes to jail or prison, or faces criminal punishment for possessing a small amount of a drug for personal use."

The bill changed the penalties for marijuana possession from a fine of up to \$500 and up to 30 days in jail for a first-time offense, to a civil fine of \$25. The bill will also eliminate a suspended driver's license and a criminal record for anyone charged.

Hashish oil, which is a form of highly concentrated tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, was a schedule one drug and classified as a felony. Under Herring's new bill, it will be treated as marijuana.

Attorney General Mark Herring called the new bill a "really important first step in the right direction."

Herring is not the only one who thinks it's a step in the right direction.

Dustin Dautremont, Manager of *Vivid Vapes* on Main Street, personally does not smoke marijuana himself; however, he would sell it in his shop if it were to become legal for recreational use. "At the end of the day, we need a national decriminalization on a federal level for it to be legalized," said Dautremont.

Vivid Vapes is a popular hangout spot for Radford locals and university students due to its relaxing atmosphere and proximity to campus.

When asked if he thinks the decriminalization will bring more business into smoke shops, Dautremont said, "I don't know if that's really gonna increase any numbers. People who

smoke weed are gonna smoke weed, whether it's legal or not.”

A Christiansburg local, Sarah McCraw, who is not a college student, believes that the decriminalization of marijuana is a step in the right direction for making recreational use legal.

“Just think, if we did legalize it, we could tax it and make so much money for the state,” said McCraw. McCraw is in favor of the new bill and hopes it will become fully legal.

She also mentioned that her husband smokes marijuana daily because he has epilepsy, and it helps with his seizures.

A statewide legal recreational use bill would not only bring in millions of tax dollars, but people who do not meet the strict medical requirements for a prescription would be able to benefit from cannabis as well.

The current [Student Code of Conduct](#) states the following, “The university does not condone the possession, use or distribution of marijuana, LSD or other hallucinogens, narcotics or any other illegal drugs by anyone in any campus facility. Any individual known to be possessing, using, or distributing such drugs is subject to campus disciplinary action and criminal arrest, imprisonment and/or fine according to state law.”

In the past, the university has been alerted when a student is charged with possession. This resulted in a hefty fine from the university, a required drug and alcohol awareness online class, and often suspension from the university depending on the severity.

If this article interested you, check out an opinion article on how [All Drugs Should be Legal](#) on The Tartan.

**Photo Credit: (Rick Proctor on Unsplash)**