# Biden Administration Moves to Reclassify Marijuana as Less Dangerous Substance in US



On May 16, 2024, the Biden administration initiated a significant shift in U.S. drug policy by moving to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous substance. Under President Joe Biden's directive, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has published a draft regulation in the Federal Register to reclassify marijuana from a Schedule I to a Schedule III substance under the Controlled Substances Act. This reclassification acknowledges the medical use of cannabis and its lower potential for abuse compared to other Schedule I drugs.

Attorney General Merrick Garland approved the proposed rule, which will now undergo a 60-day public comment period followed by a possible review from an administrative judge. The reclassification does not legalize recreational use but aligns marijuana with substances like ketamine and anabolic steroids, which are still controlled but have recognized medical applications.

The move follows a 2022 recommendation from the Department of Health and Human Services and is part of President Biden’s broader effort to address criminal justice reform and racial equity. The administration has already issued blanket pardons for federal convictions of simple marijuana possession and urged state and local authorities to take similar actions.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre highlighted the racial disparities in marijuana-related arrests and prosecutions and emphasized that the reclassification would facilitate crucial research on the drug. Dr. Kevin Sabet, a critic of the reclassification from the group Smart Approaches to Marijuana, argued that insufficient data supports the reclassification, attributing the decision to political motives rather than scientific evidence.

The reclassification could also alleviate the significant tax burdens on marijuana businesses and enable more extensive clinical research, aligning federal policies with the growing acceptance of marijuana in various states. Currently, 38 states have legalized medical marijuana, and 24 have legalized recreational use, helping to expand the nearly $30 billion marijuana industry.