

# LAST PRISONER PROJECT

## Last Prisoner Project-Sponsored Automatic Cannabis Record Clearance Signed by Governor Newsom

On September 18th, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed [Assembly Bill 1706](#) into law, resolving unacceptable implementation delays in California's existing cannabis record sealing law. [The Last Prisoner Project](#) (LPP) and Assemblymember Mia Bonta championed this legislation, which works to ensure that Californians entitled to cannabis record sealing under existing law finally receive relief.

After Proposition 64 was passed in 2016, individuals with low-level cannabis records became eligible to have those records cleared. The legislature then passed automatic record relief-focused AB 1793, which aimed to ensure individuals would not have to petition the court to get their eligible cannabis-related records cleared (that relief would be provided automatically instead). This bill was a nation-leading step in cannabis and criminal justice reform and has since been modeled in several states.

Unfortunately, because the implementation of AB 1793 has been inconsistent across the state, tens of thousands of people have yet to receive the relief they're due.

In December 2021, Attorney General Rob Bonta responded to these implementation gaps and urged county district attorneys and courts to take the necessary steps to enforce AB 1793 effectively. However, it soon became clear that the statute would need to be fixed to do this, which is where AB 1706 comes in.

Assemblymember Bonta, the lead author of AB 1706, claimed, "it is unimaginable and unacceptable that years after we legalized cannabis, Californians are still waiting to get their records cleared. We promised this to tens of thousands of Californians, and to date, we have fallen short of that promise. My bill will finally provide that relief and guarantee individuals are not denied opportunities to succeed in life because of minor cannabis records."

AB 1706 provides clear deadlines and guidance for the agencies charged with clearing eligible records from individuals' criminal histories. It also adds oversight and progress reporting to ensure that bureaucratic delays and lack of transparency no longer bar deserving individuals from relief.



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"The Last Prisoner Project is thrilled to see Governor Newsom recognize the urgency of signing AB 1706 into law. We're grateful that with California, a national leader in smart public policy, has recognized that the onus is on the government to remove these erroneous convictions from people's records".

"With this decision, California is showing accountability for the racist origins of cannabis prohibition. It's past time that we get this right. After all, justice delayed is justice denied," said Gracie Burger, State Policy Director at Last Prisoner Project, the bill's primary sponsor.

By signing AB 1706 into law, Governor Newsom is ensuring that California will make good on its overdue promise to allow individuals criminalized by prohibition to move on with their lives. We are proud to have sponsored this bill and eagerly look forward to its implementation.

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