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### **Immigrant Defense Project Statement on NYS Marijuana Legalization**

*New York State Legislature Passes Momentous Legislation to Legalize Recreational Marijuana Use with Direct Implications for Immigrant New Yorkers*

#### **NEW YORK, NY---**

The following statement in response to the passage of the “Marihuana Taxation and Regulation Act” (MRTA) can be attributed to **Jose Chapa, Senior Policy Associate at the Immigrant Defense Project:**

“For years, New York marijuana convictions have caused immeasurable harm to communities across New York State. Because of harsh immigration laws, marijuana convictions can carry devastating consequences for immigrants—including deportation, detention and the loss of eligibility for immigration status. IDP worked with elected officials and advocates, including the Drug Policy Alliance and the Start SMART coalition, to draft key provisions of the MRTA and bring comprehensive marijuana justice to New York.

**Notably, New Yorkers seeking status or immigration relief will be able to vacate old marijuana convictions to clear the path to become residents and citizens.** Under the immigration law, some vacated or expunged convictions may be used as the basis for deportation, detention, denial of immigration benefits. The MRTA ensures that immigrants with old marijuana convictions can petition the court to vacate their conviction in a procedure that will be recognized as valid by immigration courts and agencies.

In the coming weeks and months, IDP will publish resources to help immigrants and their advocates navigate the new law. IDP continues work towards the fight against the unjust immigration laws which still needlessly punish immigrants for drug-related activity.”

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