

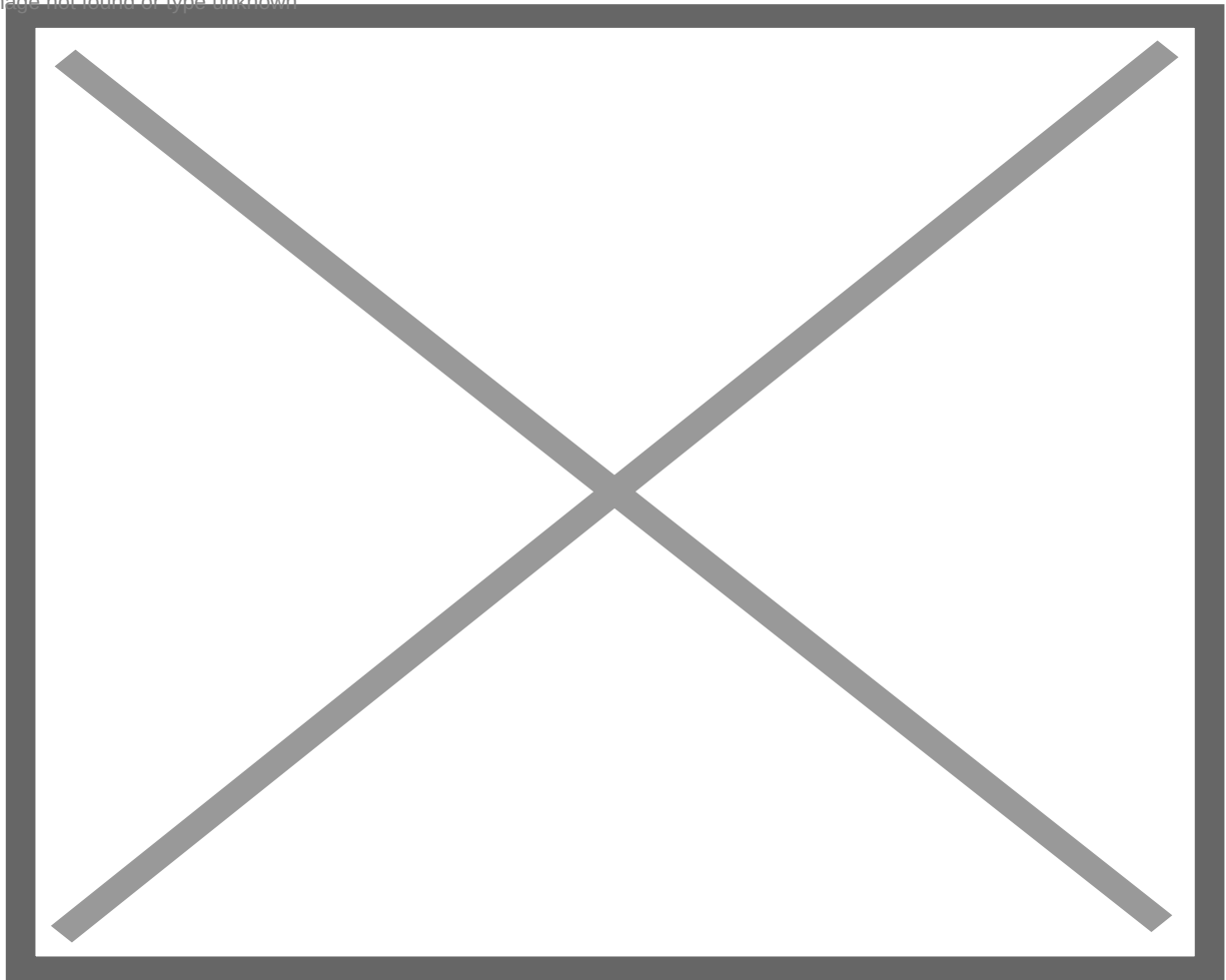
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U.S. Health Officials Recommend Reclassifying Marijuana as Schedule III Drug, Paving Way for Expanded Cannabis Market

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Ernice Gilbert **August 30, 2023**

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In a significant policy shift, U.S. health authorities are advocating for the reclassification of marijuana as a Schedule III drug, according to a letter dated August 29 from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) (via Bloomberg). The move could potentially expand the cannabis market and has been based on a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review.

Assistant Secretary for Health Rachel Levine indicated in the letter that the FDA had reviewed marijuana's current status and that her recommendation was in alignment with their findings. Under the Controlled Substances Act, drugs are categorized into one of five schedules based on their medical utility, abuse potential, and safety or risk of dependency. A Schedule III

classification would mark a dramatic change from marijuana's current status as a Schedule I substance, a category reserved for drugs considered to have a high abuse risk and no accepted medical use, such as heroin.

The shift comes on the heels of a set of marijuana-focused initiatives rolled out by President Joe Biden last October, which included [pardoning all prior federal offenses](#) for simple possession of the drug. The president also encouraged state governors to pardon state-level offenses and asked the HHS secretary and the U.S. Attorney General to initiate a review of marijuana's federal scheduling.

Though marijuana is permitted for various uses in multiple U.S. states, the FDA retains the sole federal authority to approve drugs for medical applications across the country. Its reclassification would indicate a more accepted medical utility of the substance, opening doors for further research and potentially, wider legal usage.

This proposed reclassification could serve as a significant milestone in the ongoing debate about marijuana legalization and its medical benefits, effectively altering its legal status and paving the way for an expanded cannabis market.