

Ana Sol Gutiérrez
18th Legislative District
Montgomery County



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 220
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3181 · 301-858-3181
Fax 410-841-3232 · 301-858-3232
E-Mail ana.gutierrez@house.state.md.us

House Appropriations Committee
Health and
Human Resources Subcommittee
Oversight Committee on Pensions

The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 7, 2007

District Office
3317 Turner Lane
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815
Tell/Fax 301-718-0707

Ms. Deb Grandner
Director of Resident Life
2100 Annapolis Hall
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Dear Ms. Grandner,

As a member of the Maryland House of Delegates who has a life-long commitment to providing educational opportunities for all, I am writing to urge you to support and respect the will of the University of Maryland – College Park student body by enacting the recommendations of the Residence Hall Association (RHA) Senate to change penalties for first time marijuana possession offenses in the residence halls from a “Class A” to a “Class B” violation.

The passage of the RHA Senate resolution was the culmination of yearlong campaign by a group of dedicated students led by the campus chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy. These students successfully ran a school-wide voter initiative that called on the university to lessen marijuana possession penalties on campus. After the initiative passed, administration officials advised SSDP leaders to lobby the RHA Senate to pass a similar resolution. Heeding this advice, the students led a successful educational campaign that won the support and approval of the RHA Senate.

SSDP and other leaders have successfully navigated the complex, governance system at the University of Maryland and should be recognized for their diligence and success in respecting an orderly, political process. These student leaders followed administration recommendations and learned valuable lessons about civic engagement and political change. As an institution of higher learning the University should encourage our best and brightest to have respect for our democratic ideals and principals. A failure to enact an approved residence hall policy recommendation could discourage these promising student leaders in following the democratic process.

It is my consideration that the failure to enact the recommendations of the RHA Senate by your office could have more serious implications than would result from a change in residential policy.

As an elected official in Maryland, I recognize the serious impact that drug abuse has on young people in this state, and support common sense proposals to reduce drug abuse rates among youth. Moving first time offenses for marijuana possession of marijuana to a "Class B" violation would ensure that students are not removed from the residence halls, while still receiving a punishment similar to those who unlawfully possess alcohol while underage or commit offenses such as petty theft.

Students who are forced to leave the residence halls during the semester often are not able to complete coursework, and may leave the school altogether. Students who consequently abandon their goals for completing a college education are more likely to engage in less productive behaviors including abuse drugs in the future.

I urge you to enact the RHA Senate policy recommendations by reclassifying first time marijuana possession offenses in the residence halls to a "Class B" violation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ana Sol Gutierrez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez

Cc: Dr. Linda Clement
Vice President for Student Affairs