

H.225

An act relating to possession of a therapeutic dosage of buprenorphine

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to remove criminal penalties for possession of 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine. Persons under 21 years of age in possession of 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine would be referred to the Court Diversion Program for the purpose of enrollment in the Youth Substance Awareness Safety Program. Persons under 16 years of age in possession of 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine would be subject to delinquency proceedings in the Family Division of the Superior Court. Knowing and unlawful possession of more than 224 milligrams of buprenorphine would continue to be criminal and penalized in the same manner as other narcotics pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4234.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 4234 is amended to read:

§ 4234. DEPRESSANT, STIMULANT, AND NARCOTIC DRUGS

(a) Possession.

(1)(A) ~~A~~ Except as provided by subdivision (B) of this subdivision (1), a person knowingly and unlawfully possessing a depressant, stimulant, or narcotic drug, other than heroin or cocaine, shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

(B) A person knowingly and unlawfully possessing 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine shall not be punished in accordance with subdivision (A) of this subdivision (1).

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(c) Possession of buprenorphine by a person under 21 years of age.

(1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, a person under 21 years of age who knowingly and unlawfully possesses 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine commits a civil violation and shall be subject to the provisions of section 4230b of this title.

(2) A person under 16 years of age who knowingly and unlawfully possesses 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine commits a delinquent act and shall be subject to the provisions of section 4230j of this title.

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 4234 is amended to read:

§ 4234. DEPRESSANT, STIMULANT, AND NARCOTIC DRUGS

(a) Possession.

~~(1)(A) Except as provided by subdivision (B) of this subdivision (1), a~~ A person knowingly and unlawfully possessing a depressant, stimulant, or narcotic drug, other than heroin or cocaine, shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

~~(B) A person knowingly and unlawfully possessing 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine shall not be punished in accordance with subdivision (A) of this subdivision (1).~~

* * *

~~(c) Possession of buprenorphine by a person under 21 years of age.~~

~~(1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, a person under 21 years of age who knowingly and unlawfully possesses 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine commits a civil violation and shall be subject to the provisions of section 4230b of this title.~~

~~(2) A person under 16 years of age who knowingly and unlawfully possesses 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine commits a delinquent act and shall be subject to the provisions of section 4230j of this title.~~

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Secs. 1 (intent) and 2 (buprenorphine exemption) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Sec. 3 (repeal of buprenorphine exemption) shall take effect July 1, 2023.