

TO Interested Parties

FROM Dave Metz, Miranda Everitt and Denny Han
FM3 Research

RE: DC Voter Views of Initiative 81

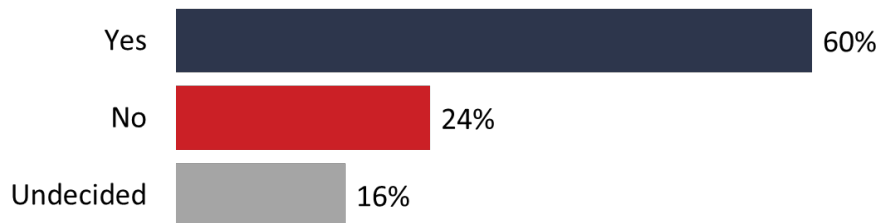
DATE September 1, 2020

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of Washington, D.C., voters to assess support for Initiative 81, a measure that would make restrictions on plant medicines among the Metropolitan Police Department’s lowest law enforcement priorities.ⁱ **The study found three in five voters support I-81, a nine-point increase since April 2020.** This has occurred as voters have become more familiar with the measure – awareness has tripled in the last four months. Overall, the data show that the measure has gained impressive support in recent months, fueled by a broad grassroots organizing campaign and growing frustration with the increasingly unpopular War on Drugs that disproportionately targets Black DC residents.

Key specific findings of the survey include:

- **Given the measure’s official ballot language alone, three in five support Initiative 81.** As shown in Figure 1, 60% of District voters back Initiative 81 initially – more than double the number opposed.

Figure 1: Initiative 81 Initial Vote



- **Support for Initiative 81 has increased by nine points since April.** As shown in Figure 2 on the following page, a slim majority (51%) supported I-81 in the spring, with more than one in five undecided. Since then, the share who support the measure has grown to a broad majority, while the number undecided has decreased.

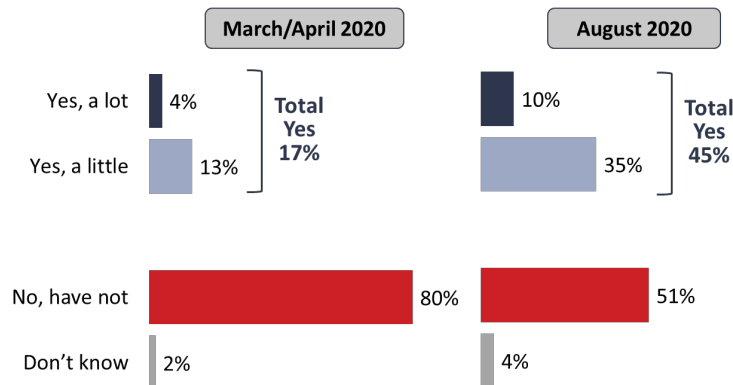
Figure 2: Vote After Information

Vote	April 2020	August 2020	Difference
Yes	51%	60%	+9%
No	27%	24%	-3%
Undecided	22%	16%	-6%

- This increase in support comes as voters are becoming more familiar with I-81.** As shown in Figure 3 below, three times as many District voters now have seen, heard or read at least a little about Initiative 81 as did in the spring. Notably, 56% of those who are aware of the measure also say they would vote “yes.” This comes after a nearly unprecedented grassroots push to qualify the measure from over 7,000 volunteers.

Figure 3: Awareness of I-81

Have you seen, heard, or read anything recently about Initiative 81, a District of Columbia ballot initiative to make the investigation and arrests for possession and use of certain plants and fungi, known as entheogens, among the District’s lowest law enforcement priorities?



- Support for Initiative 81 remains strong after an exchange of pro and con arguments that lean heavily on messages about how we need a new approach to our outdated drug laws.** As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, voters’ overall support increases as voters get more information about the measure. Support is near two-thirds after a plain-language explanation of what the measure would do, and remains as high after a thorough, balanced exchange of pro and con arguments. Many of the arguments in favor build on the deep unpopularity of the War on Drugs, which District residents view unfavorably by a 34% to 55% margin.

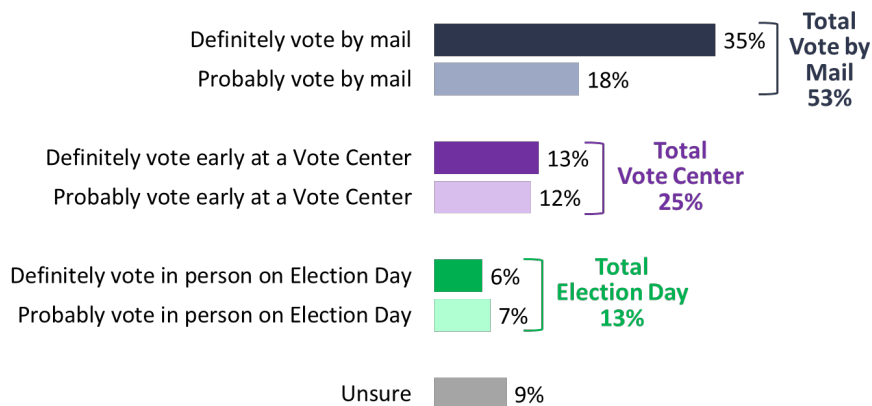
Figure 4: Progression of Support for Initiative 81 After Messages

Position	Initial Vote	After Information	After Pro and Con Messages	Change
Total Yes	60%	64%	64%	+4%
Total No	24%	24%	25%	+1%
Undecided	16%	13%	12%	-4%

- At the same time, interest in November’s election is extremely high – and a broad majority plans to vote early.** Asked to rate their level of interest on a 10-point scale, fully 85% gave the highest rating, and the mean score overall was 9.5. Interest is especially strong among women and Democrats ages 50+. At the same time, nearly all D.C. voters plan to vote early in some fashion. A majority (53%) says they will vote by mail, and 25% will vote early at a Vote Center.

Figure 6: Method of Voting Intention

As you may know, DC will send every voter a vote by mail ballot in the upcoming election due to the coronavirus pandemic. Thinking about the November election, will you ...



In sum, **the survey results show a strong path to victory for Initiative 81 with continued investment in a strong campaign.** District voters offer broad initial support for the measure – and growing numbers of voters have heard about the measure and its potential benefits for the district. After modeling a strong, positive campaign that depends on the negative impact the War on Drugs has had on Black District residents, more than three in five continue to say that they would vote “yes” – underscoring the importance of broad communications with the electorate to firm up the broad initial support that voters offer.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From August 16 – August 24, 2020, FM3 completed 620 live telephone interviews (on both landlines and cell phones) with likely November 2020 voters in Washington, D.C. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the

95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.