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Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
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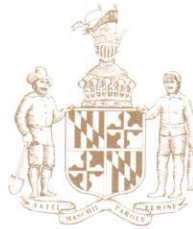
Vice Chair

Health and Government
Operations Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and
Long Term Care

Chair, Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities



The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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House Bill 870

Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Cannabis Commission – Compassionate Use Fund -- Revisions (as amended)

SPONSOR TESTIMONY: Joseline Peña-Melnyk (SUPPORT, as amended)

Please disregard Fiscal and Policy Note

Thank you, Chairman Pendergrass, and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee for the opportunity to present to you House Bill (HB) 870. This bill will require the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Cannabis Commission to administer the Compassionate Use Fund, with the intention of making medical cannabis more accessible to certain individuals.

Medical cannabis has been shown to alleviate pain experienced by patients who are suffering from any of a multitude of chronic or acute illnesses, illnesses that do not discriminate by demographic or economic factors. In many cases, more traditional forms of pain relief are not effective in the treatment of pain that cannabis has been shown to alleviate.

Like many pharmaceuticals today, medical cannabis is expensive, and health insurance carriers are not generally required to cover the cost. The purpose of the Compassionate Use Fund is to provide more affordable access to medical cannabis for individuals enrolled in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program or in the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System, through discounted prices.

HB 870 tasks the Commission with establishing and administering procedures for collecting and assessing fees to support the Compassionate Use Fund, as well as reimbursing licensed dispensaries for the cost of medical cannabis dispensed to eligible individuals under the program.

I have worked closely with stakeholders on this bill and believe we have reached a consensus as reflected in the original bill and the three amendments offered.

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 870.