

HB 1506 Del. David Moon Cannabis - Personal Use Amount - Legalization

House Judiciary Committee March 6, 2020

Joseph A. Adams, M.D.

## **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT**

MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

We recommend an amendment to further reduce the civil penalty for a first finding of guilt for possession of the personal amount of cannabis, if under age of 21, not to exceed \$25 (not \$100 as in the bill).

And for the second and third finding of guilt, the penalty should not exceed \$50 and \$100 respectively, (not \$250 and \$500 respectively as in the bill).

And the civil penalty for a person at least 21 years old possessing more than the personal amount but less than double the personal amount, should not exceed \$50 (not \$250 as in the bill).

Cannabis is the most commonly used controlled psychoactive substance after alcohol and tobacco. Criminalization of drug possession is the largest driver of arrests in the United States. Of 1.6 million annual drug arrests in the U.S., over 80% are for possession only.

There is no evidence that arrest or incarceration reduces drug use. This approach is disproportionately destructive. To black and brown communities. Separating people from their families and community has lasting consequences.

The state funds efforts to help people out of the cycle of drug use, poverty and unemployment, but simultaneously the state also makes it nearly impossible for poor people to get a job – for the rest of their lives – by giving them a criminal record for cannabis use.

Our criminal justice expenditures do the most harm to the people who need the most help.

This bill would complement the goals of the Justice Reinvestment Act, as well as successful LEAD programs (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion), both of which divert drug offenses from the criminal justice system with excellent results.

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