



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: January 20, 2021

RE: SB143 Criminal Law - Marijuana - Possession and Possession  
With Intent to Distribute

### **The MLLC supports SB143 Criminal Law - Marijuana - Possession and Possession With Intent to Distribute.**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB143.

Maryland has taken appropriate strides in correcting the wrongs of drug-related mass incarceration against people of color. In 2014, the Maryland General Assembly decriminalized possession of up to 10 grams of marijuana. It is now measured as a civil offense that carries a \$100 fine. It was good step to begin marijuana possession reform, but more can be done.

Despite our state's decriminalization efforts, 2018 data reports that Black Marylanders are [twice](#) as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession as white Marylanders. A similar trend is seen in [Baltimore](#) where Black residents are disproportionately arrested. This hyper-policing of low-level marijuana infractions severely hurts our communities of color, including Latino and immigrant families. Convictions of these arrests damage employment and education opportunities, and housing stability. These individuals should not bear this burden for small amounts when there is a growing majority that supports [legalization](#).

SB143 increases the threshold for the civil offense of possession of marijuana from less than 10 grams to less than one ounce. Maryland has among the smallest amounts of decriminalization in the nation, where most states have decriminalized one ounce. Now, is the time to right another wrong.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB143.