



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr. Chairman and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Chief David Morris, Co-Chair, MCPA, Joint Legislative Committee
Sheriff Darren Popkin, Co-Chair, MSA, Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 20, 2021

RE: **SB 143 – Criminal Law – Marijuana – Possession With Intent to Distribute**

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) OPPOSE SB 143. This bill would increase the amount of marijuana in which possession is a civil offense from 10 grams to one ounce.

Maryland is one of the first states to have decriminalized less than ten grams of marijuana, even though state data has shown that marijuana use is widely prevalent, especially among young adults. MCPA and MSA are concerned that this more than 150 percent increase in the amount of marijuana that one could possess and still be subject to a civil (not criminal) offense sends the wrong message to our youth, provides additional incentives for illegal activities, and exacerbates the difficulty law enforcement has in combating illegal use of drug contraband.

Further decriminalizing a drug from 10 grams up to 28 grams could also lead to more traffic fatalities on our roadways caused by impaired driving. Law enforcement believes its longstanding efforts to combat impaired driving will be seriously undermined by this legislation.

We are equally concerned that increasing this limit will promote the use of marijuana in publicly used spaces such as Ocean City beaches, the City Dock in Annapolis, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, stadiums, shopping mall parking lots, etc., and will promote the use of marijuana while driving a motor vehicle, boat or other vehicles.

The law enforcement community is concerned that, particularly among our youth, that the early and frequent use of marijuana is a gateway experience to other more compromising drugs and its increased availability should not be encouraged.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA OPPOSE SB 143 and urge an UNFAVORABLE Committee report.