



WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 833

Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

March 3rd, 2022
Finance Committee
Maryland Senate

TO: Hon. Delores Kelly, Chair, and Members of the Committee

FR: Jason Chorpenning
President, United Food & Commercial Workers International Union Local 27
21 West Road, Towson, MD 21204

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the 23,000 working men and women represented by United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 27, I am submitting testimony in support of SB 833 with Amendments.

Nationally, UFCW represents over 1.3 million hard-working men and women who work in highly regulated industries including the emerging legal cannabis industry. Our cannabis members can be found across multiple states in growing and cultivating facilities, manufacturing, and processing facilities, and in laboratories and dispensaries, including in Maryland.

UFCW Local 27 supports the legalization of recreational cannabis in Maryland with the addition of labor peace agreements as a condition of cannabis regulation. Labor peace agreements protect businesses, workers, and consumers, and are an effective regulatory tool for the state.

Wherever cannabis is legalized, the UFCW is committed to building family sustaining jobs and a strong, diverse, and skilled workforce. These are good-paying, union jobs in an area that has a higher unemployment rate than the state average.

We want to emphasize one important fact: the cannabis industry in Maryland does not operate in a free-market environment. It is a state-sanctioned and regulated. Unlike a traditional market not anyone is entitled to open a business and compete for business; a limited number of licenses are awarded by the state.

As a regulated, non-competitive industry, the state has an interest in ensuring the industry promotes the public good. That the industry is open to women and minority owned businesses. That we are growing local businesses instead of only promoting multi-state operators backed by venture capital.

The bill includes numerous provisions that address outstanding criminal justice reform issues and the need for equity and inclusion to ensure the industry is reflective of the state and grows local businesses.

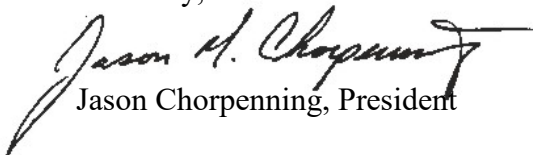
As a regulated, non-competitive industry, the state also has an interest in ensuring the jobs created will pay a family sustaining, living wage.

The inclusion of labor peace language allows employees to exercise their right to unionize without intimidation or coercion and ensures a democratic process. In addition, collective bargaining agreements generally mean employees will be covered by health and welfare plans, removing the drain of the state established social safety net.

The inclusion of this language is also closing a loophole some employers have used to deny worker's their rights. Since the federal government still considers cannabis an "federally" illegal industry, the federal government has avoided a decision on employee's right to organize under the normal procedure of National Labor Relations Act. The inclusion of a labor peace language in the regulations ensures that workers in this industry have the same rights as other workers in Maryland.

I urge the Committee to SUPPORT SB 833 with Amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jason H. Chorpenning". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jason Chorpenning, President