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House Bill 1172 Medical Cannabis – Visiting Qualifying Patients

Position: Favorable

Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chairwoman Cullison and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. My name is Warren Lemley, I'm President of Peake ReLeaf, an independently Maryland owned and operated medical cannabis dispensary in Rockville and I strongly support House Bill 1172.

When we were awarded the license for District 17 we were awarded a license where I grew up. I am as local an owner and operator of a medical cannabis dispensary as you will be able to find in our State. The high school I attended is less than 5 miles from our location. The reason I bring this up is because when we were awarded a license to serve the community I grew up in, I took it seriously. I looked at this as my responsibility to provide the best medicine and service for our patients, but more importantly it placed me in a position to give back and work toward improving the rights of Maryland's patients and citizens in regard to cannabis policy. Improving patients rights is what brings me here today.

Countless times I have been at our dispensary when qualified patients from other States have come in with the expectations to be served due to their medical status in other States.

Regretfully I have turned them away and directed them to Washington D.C. which allows reciprocity. There they can receive access to medical cannabis from a much smaller medical cannabis program than ours. These patients have been visiting for a number of reasons.

- Our dispensary location in Rockville is less than 5 miles away from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and over the years we have had veterans with medical cannabis certifications from other States looking to receive their medicine who we must turn away.

- Patients traveling to receive treatment at many of our esteemed healthcare systems.
- Patients when they travel to Maryland for work.
- Patients if they are visiting or staying with family.

Other reasons this legislation is consequential:

- Out of State pediatric patients will not have access to the adult use market.
- Cannabis patients from other States should have access to medicine with higher potencies than what will be available in the adult use market. This is most important for patients with the most severe conditions.
- Cannabis patients often turn to cannabis in an effort to distance themselves from other pharmaceutical drugs. This is important because cannabis patients may no longer have access to the same pharmaceutical drugs they once took when they begin to utilize medical cannabis. This results in losing access to previous pharmaceutical drugs which means any medical cannabis patient traveling to Maryland may no longer have access to any of the medication they once took to help address their condition.

These are just some of the many reasons that we must pass HB 1172. The incredible healthcare systems in Maryland are meant to improve the lives of the people in Maryland and those who seek specialized care from around the Country. We shouldn't be keeping medicine that they have become dependent on away from them resulting in a poorer quality of life.

We have worked with the MMCC to develop this legislation. It is our goal to work hand in hand with the MMCC to provide regulated medical cannabis to out of State patients utilizing the same conditions, regulatory oversight and inventory tracking system as all other patients in Maryland. Maryland currently has the most inclusive conditions list for our medical cannabis program. So if a patient is awarded a medical cannabis certification in any other State then they should be able to be awarded a medical cannabis certification in Maryland. For the many reasons listed above, I respectfully encourage a favorable report on HB 1172.

Respectfully Submitted,
Warren Lemley
President, Peake ReLeaf