

St. Mary's County NAACP Unit #7025

TESTIMONY

February 2nd, 2023

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Criminal Procedure - Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause - Cannabis

Sponsor: Senator Jill Carter (D-Baltimore City)

Position: Support

Reason for Position:

The St. Mary's County NAACP stands in support of Senate Bill 51. There's no question that the criminalization of marijuana has caused economic and racial harm, and that's why Marylanders have moved to legalize its consumption. Unfortunately, dangerous loopholes are still in place that can be used to perpetuate the "war on drugs", which really is a war on communities of color. One loophole that's in place is the police having the power to conduct traffic stops and searches based on their belief that they smelled marijuana.

I wish I could say this is something I never experience personally, but unfortunately I have and far too many young black men have also. This loophole was used by some police as an intimidation tactic before marijuana was legalized and it was wrong then as it is now. The thought of police being able to use this loophole when marijuana will be legalized on July 1st 2023 is unconscionable.

Marijuana odor has been used as a loophole to justify racial profiling for far too long. As we look forward to legalization, this body must ensure that the smell, or perception of smell, of a soon-to-be legal substance, without any other behavior, cannot be used to justify a stop and search.

Again, the St. Mary's County NAACP urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 51.

Roderick Lewis  
Chair, Political Action Committee