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TESTIMONY ON SB0051 POSITION: (FAVORABLE)
Criminal Procedure–Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause-Cannabis

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Toby Ditz

I am Toby Ditz, a resident of District 40 in Baltimore City. I am submitting testimony in **strong support of SB0051.**

I have been a proud Baltimorean for almost 40 years, and I have been following police reform legislation closely for the last eight of them in collaboration with more experienced local activists in West Baltimore and throughout the City.

When I was in college at Northwestern University in the late 1960s, my future husband and two of his friends were stopped by the Chicago police in their car as they were driving into the city. The 3 young men were then arrested for possession of marijuana after their car was searched. The pretext for the stop was that the car looked like one that was reported stolen, and the pretext for the search was the smell of marijuana. My friends were white, and within twenty-four hours, after one of them called their lawyer-father in NYC, who in turn put them in touch with local lawyers, they were released on bail and their arrest records subsequently expunged.

We all knew then what is still true today: the outcome would almost certainly have been different had my friends been Black and without easy access to good lawyers. In Maryland today, black drivers are still much more likely than whites to be stopped and searched, and, as a consequence, more likely to be arrested and jailed than whites.

One major aim of the historic suite of police reform bills passed by the General Assembly in 2021 was to curb racial bias in policing in part by heightening protections against illegal stops, searches, and arrests. SB0051 is a fitting successor of this historic legislation, and it too will help to reduce unnecessary interactions with the police. It is especially timely now that Maryland has legalized the use of cannabis.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on Senate Bill #0051.