

February 1, 2023

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Written Testimony

SB51 – Criminal Procedure - Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause - Cannabis

Position: Favorable

Dear Senators William Smith, Jeffrey Waldstreicher, William Folden and Committee,

The current legal standards allow police to stop an individual or search their vehicle based on the odor of marijuana alone. Police encounters that begin based on the odor of marijuana undermine the right to privacy and enable racial profiling. It is the logical and necessary extension of the legislature's work in 2022 to legalize recreational marijuana use to limit the use of the odor of marijuana in police encounters in the 2023 legislative session. Marylanders should not fear police interactions because of the lingering odor of a now-legal substance.

As a Unitarian Universalist I believe that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity. It is neither respectful nor dignified to be stopped and/or searched because of a smell from something legal. Interactions with police where someone feels their rights have been violated or when a person is really afraid can turn out very poorly. People of color and low socioeconomic status have been more likely to receive longer or more severe penalties around drugs and have more to fear from interactions with the police. It is imperative that people do NOT have reason to be afraid of the police when they haven't broken any laws and that we honor people's rights to privacy and to be free from undue search and pursuit. This is why I am asking you to support Senate Bill 51.

Thank you for your leadership and willingness to make bold change that meets the moment we are in! I know that with your support of Senate Bill 51 we can ensure that we get legalization right in Maryland and protect Marylanders from unnecessary police interactions and violations of their rights.

Sincerely,

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