



***Mission:** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy **Vision:** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

SB 399: Cannabis - Advertising - Prohibited Locations

Hearing Date: March 7, 2024

Committee: Finance

Position: Unfavorable

On behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association's Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis Network, we thank you all for your work to evaluate and establish alcohol regulations that will keep our communities, youth, and other at-risk populations safe. We are opposed to SB 399, which would allow cannabis advertising on billboards, except for within 500 feet of a substance use treatment facility, a primary or secondary school, a licensed childcare center, or a playground, recreational center, or public park.

Although cannabis is a legal product now for adults 21 and over, it is still illegal for youth under 21, and is associated with certain detrimental effects on mental and physical health. Cannabis use in adolescence is associated with poor school performance, higher drop-out rates in college students, and a higher likelihood of abuse or dependence in adulthood.

Exposure to cannabis advertising, including billboards, is associated with initiation of use and increased future use, lower perceptions of harm, and positive attitudes about use. Youth exposure to and engagement with cannabis promotions and brands is associated with past year cannabis use, more problematic use, and reporting negative consequences.

Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, Vermont, and dozens of cities and communities currently ban billboards. Baltimore City has a ban on alcohol and tobacco billboards that has withstood challenges in the courts. The Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission banned various types of advertising, including billboards in 2018. This policy is an excellent way to protect our youth from the known risks of cannabis and should be maintained in law.

We urge an unfavorable report on SB 399.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 150-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing health disparities that plague our state and our nation.