

MARYLAND CANNABIS PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Deondra P. Asike, M.D.

February 7, 2024

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The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 399 - Cannabis - Advertising - Prohibited Locations - Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council (the Council) is submitting this letter of opposition for **Senate Bill (SB) 399 - Cannabis - Advertising - Prohibited Locations**. SB 399 repeals Maryland's current ban on outdoor cannabis advertising and billboards, a policy the Maryland General Assembly created just last session. In place of the ban, the bill proposes a 500-foot advertising exclusionary zone around substance use treatment facilities and select child focused locations, including schools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and public parks.

The Council opposes SB 399 because of the real risk it presents for Maryland's youth. The Council has been tasked with studying and addressing the public health impacts related to adult-use cannabis legalization. Research shows that exposure to cannabis advertising is associated with higher average use, intentions to use, positive expectancies, and negative consequences in children.¹ One study revealed that exposure to cannabis billboards is associated with more frequent cannabis use and cannabis use disorder in adolescents.² This is troubling because cannabis use in youth is associated with psychosis, anxiety, depression, impaired cognitive development, and other serious health challenges.³ With intentionality, great forethought and acknowledgement, the Maryland General Assembly included the current outdoor advertising ban in legislation to address these risks.

Furthermore, the proposed 500-foot exclusionary zone does not adequately protect youth from exposure to cannabis billboards for two reasons. First, 500-feet is still in very close proximity to the youth focused locations the bill seeks to protect. Second, the list of protected locations is

¹ *Planting the Seed for Marijuana Use: Changes in Exposure to Medical Marijuana Advertising and Subsequent Adolescent Marijuana Use, Cognitions, and Consequences Over Seven Years*, Elizabeth J. D'Amico, et al., *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 188, 385-391 (2018).

² *Cannabis Marketing and Problematic Cannabis Use Among Adolescents*, Pamela J. Trangenstein, et al., *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 82(2), 288-296 (2021).

³ *Marijuana and Youth: The Impact of Marijuana Use on Teen Health and Wellbeing*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/featured-topics/marijuana-youth.html>.

under inclusive and leaves out many locations frequented by Maryland's children, including museums, places of worship, and sporting facilities like Camden Yards. Given the substantial public health risks that cannabis billboards present to Maryland's children, maintaining the current ban on billboards is essential.

It is also important to note that many states (AL, DE, FL, HI, MN, MT, NY, SD, and UT) prohibit the use of billboards for cannabis advertising because of the risk they present.⁴ In addition, there are other avenues of advertising available to Maryland's cannabis industry that present less of a risk to Maryland's children. To date, the lack of cannabis billboards has not harmed the industry. Maryland's legal cannabis sales totaled approximately \$800 million in 2023.⁵ The repeal of Maryland's cannabis billboard ban is unnecessary and creates a real risk for youth in Maryland.

The Council respectfully urges this Committee for an unfavorable report on SB 399. This bill is a step backwards, and conflicts with Maryland's desire to protect youth from the harms of cannabis.

Sincerely,



Deondra Asike, M.D.
Chair, Maryland Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council

⁴ ALA. ADMIN. CODE R. 538-X-4.17; DEL. CODE ANN. TIT. 16, § 4919A; FLA. STAT. ANN. § 381.986; HAW. CODE R. § 11-850-145; MINN. STAT. § 342.64; MONT. ADMIN. R. 42.39.123; N.Y. CANNABIS LAW § 86; S.D. ADMIN. R. 44:90:10:14.01; and UTAH ADMIN. CODE R. 4-41a-403.

⁵ *MCA Medical and Adult-Use Cannabis Data Dashboard*, Maryland Cannabis Administration, available at <https://mmcc.maryland.gov/Pages/Data-Dashboard.aspx>.