



March 7, 2024

HB 474

Testimony from Olivia Naugle, senior policy analyst, MPP, favorable

Dear Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Olivia Naugle, and I am the senior policy analyst for the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest cannabis policy reform organization in the United States. MPP has been working to improve cannabis policy for 29 years; as a national organization, we have expertise in the various approaches taken by different states.

The Marijuana Policy Project strongly supports legalizing and regulating cannabis for adults 21 and older and doing so in a way that repairs the damage inflicted by criminalization.

I am here today **in support of HB 474.**

In November 2022, Maryland voters voted overwhelmingly in favor (67.2 percent) of Question 4 – a constitutional amendment to legalize cannabis for adults in Maryland beginning July 1, 2023. In fact, the passage of Question 4 was the highest margin of any ballot measure to legalize cannabis.

While the passage of Question 4 was a critical step to end the failed policy of cannabis prohibition, Maryland could further reform its cannabis policy to protect residents from further criminal justice involvement and collateral consequences based on lawful cannabis activity. HB 474 is a step towards achieving that, as it would provide that a person will not violate parole, probation, or pre-trial release based on testing positive for cannabis, unless the Court or the Maryland Parole Commission makes a specific finding that the individual defendant, parolee, or probationer's use of cannabis could create a danger to the individual or other persons.

Recent legalization laws reflect a greater commitment to preventing lives from being derailed over cannabis. Several recent state cannabis legalization laws have included protections from parole and probation revocation. Connecticut, Missouri, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York's laws all include language to prevent parole and probation from being revoked for cannabis in most or all cases. Maryland should join these more recent legalization states and pass HB 474 this year.

Thank you, Chair Clippinger and members of the committee for your time and attention to this issue. I urge a favorable report of HB 474.

If you have any questions or need additional information, I would be happy to help and can be reached at the email address or phone number below.

Sincerely,
Olivia Naugle
Senior Policy Analyst

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