

HB0217-
Vehicle Laws - Cannabis Use
in Motor Vehicle With Minor
Occupant - Prohibition
Favorable Testimony

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There are 3 main reasons why cannabis use should be prevented in a motor vehicle in the presence of a minor:

- 1) Even if the vehicle is not moving at the time, a reasonable assumption can be made that it will be moving in the future, and discerning whether the driver or only a passenger was using can be a difficult proposition as the products can so easily be shared. Therefore, the use of cannabis within the motor vehicle should be prohibited. Research (and common sense) clearly shows that use of cannabis by the driver increases the risk of serious traffic accidents (links to publication below).
- 2) If the product being used is a joint, a study at Johns Hopkins University by Herrmann et al. (2015) demonstrated that second hand smoke can cause physiologically relevant levels of THC if smoked in a small confined space. This would be particularly true for the impact of the THC-containing smoke on a minor child. Unless recommended by a physician for a minor in possession of a Medical Cannabis Card, exposing a minor to physiologically relevant levels of THC is against current Maryland law, as it should be. Because many adults may not be aware of the science on second hand smoke in small spaces, HB0217 is necessary to prevent minor exposure.
- 3) The argument can be made that in a home, cannabis use can be hidden from a minor child, which is not generally the case in a motor vehicle. Studies have shown that parental use of cannabis in the presence of a minor child can prompt normalization of the drug and a greater likelihood of early cannabis use and abuse by the child.

As an aside, my experience on a visit to Colorado this year was very revealing in terms of the impact of much stricter laws there than here in Maryland. Very rarely did I smell pot smoke from a passing car, whereas in my neighborhood in Baltimore County it is a constant occurrence. And how can any of us forget that the horrific crash last year on the Baltimore Beltway that killed six construction workers in an instant was caused by a woman who tested positive for THC? Fortunately, there were no minors in that vehicle, but there could have been.

References:

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2) Herrmann ES, Cone EJ, Mitchell JM, Bigelow GE, LoDico C, Flegel R, Vandrey R. Non-smoker exposure to secondhand cannabis smoke II: Effect of room ventilation on the physiological,

subjective, and behavioral/cognitive effects. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2015 Jun 1;151:194-202. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2015.03.019. Epub 2015 Apr 6. PMID: 25957157; PMCID: PMC4747424. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4747424/pdf/nihms684529.pdf>

3) Madras BK, Han B, Compton WM, Jones CM, Lopez EI, McCance-Katz EF. Associations of Parental Marijuana Use With Offspring Marijuana, Tobacco, and Alcohol Use and Opioid Misuse. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2019 Nov 1;2(11):e1916015. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.16015. PMID: 31755950; PMCID: PMC6902822. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6902822/>