

Testimonial Against House Bill 132

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 132 as currently constructed. While it claims to support on-site cannabis consumption establishments and cannabis events, the bill is riddled with inconsistencies and ultimately upholds outdated, restrictive business models that hinder industry growth rather than foster it.

Flawed Consumption Lounge Model

The structure of on-site consumption establishments in this bill is fundamentally flawed. Rather than enabling a business model that supports sustainability and profitability, it imposes unnecessary burdens and restrictions that make success nearly impossible. The limitation on single-serving products, for example, is a clear sign that fearmongering around cannabis still exists. There is no comparative data to suggest that limiting serving sizes increases public safety—especially when alcohol, a far more dangerous substance in terms of overdose and impairment, faces no such constraints in bars or tasting room settings.

Additionally, allowing local jurisdictions to block these new businesses is not helpful when current license awardees face this issue. If the goal is normalization and integration of cannabis use, why are these establishments forced to operate under such strict conditions that would deter consumers rather than attract them? As currently constructed the bill would limit or restrict business models such as monthly memberships as an example.

Cannabis Event Regulations – A Cash Grab

While not clarifying what constitutes a Cannabis Event. The bill's cannabis event provisions place an unreasonable financial burden on vendors while serving as a blatant cash grab for the administration. The fees outlined—\$500 per event day for the host and up to \$5,000 per 2,000 attendees for the vendor—do not reflect the realities of small businesses trying to operate in a highly taxed and regulated industry. This model prioritizes government revenue over industry sustainability and is particularly exploitative to vendors who would presumably be retail licensees that already pay the highest fees and taxes in the cannabis market. This also shows that the administration is out of tune with the community by proposing a bill that would essentially be paying two separate parties in order to participate in said events.

Lack of Support for Social Equity Licensees

One of the most glaring failures of HB132 is its lack of meaningful benefits for social equity licensees. While it nominally reserves on-site consumption licenses for social equity applicants, it provides no structural support to ensure these businesses can succeed. High operating costs, limited product options, and restrictive local government interference make these licenses a hollow opportunity rather than a real path to success.

Moreover, the delayed access for social equity licensees to vendor permits until 2028 means that those who were supposed to be prioritized in the industry's rollout are again being placed at the back of the line. This is a clear failure to uphold the promises of equity and inclusion that were promised on the campaign to cannabis legalization in the state.

Conclusion

House Bill 132, as written, does not support a thriving, equitable cannabis industry. It maintains an outdated fear-based approach to cannabis consumption, prioritizes government revenue over industry health, and fails to provide real opportunities for social equity licensees. If the goal is to create a sustainable, fair, and normalized cannabis market, this bill must be significantly revised to remove restrictive business regulations, reduce excessive fees, and genuinely support those most impacted by cannabis prohibition.

I urge lawmakers to reject HB132 in its current form and work toward legislation that truly fosters a responsible and equitable cannabis industry. Especially towards supporting the social equity applicants being onboarded vs making the industry more profitable for Current licensees whom most of which are MSO's and not Maryland born cannabis brands.

Tyshawn Ellis, email: Ty2001e@gmail.com