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1/28/2025

Maryland General Assembly

100 State Circle

Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Opposition to HB12 and SB214 – Protecting Maryland’s Hemp Industry and Federal Legal Rights

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB12 and SB214, proposed legislation that poses significant threats to Maryland’s federally legal hemp industry and the livelihood of businesses like mine, Fingerboard Farm. While I support reasonable regulations to ensure public safety and product quality, these bills introduce monopolistic practices, overly broad advertising restrictions, and unwarranted control over hemp, a plant federally legalized under the 2018 Farm Bill.

HB12 and SB214 unfairly target Maryland’s hemp businesses by:

1. **Creating Monopolistic Control:** These bills appear to transfer regulatory oversight of hemp to the Maryland Cannabis Administration, giving the cannabis industry undue influence over hemp—a separate, federally legal agricultural product. This creates an uneven playing field, allowing cannabis processors to use hemp for their own formulations while burdening hemp businesses with additional taxes and restrictions.
2. **Overly Broad Advertising Restrictions:** The advertising limitations in these bills stifle the ability of hemp businesses to educate consumers about their products. Such vague and sweeping restrictions harm small businesses like mine while favoring larger cannabis companies with more resources to navigate complex regulations.
3. **Eroding Federal Protections:** The 2018 Farm Bill firmly established hemp as an independent agricultural commodity. HB12 and SB214 undermine this federal framework by subordinating hemp to state cannabis regulations, stripping away the legal rights granted to hemp farmers and processors at the federal level.

Rather than folding hemp into cannabis regulations, Maryland should recognize the unique nature of the hemp industry and create clear, fair, and independent regulations tailored to it.

Doing so will preserve Maryland's compliance with federal law while fostering innovation, competition, and growth within the hemp sector.

I urge the Maryland General Assembly to reconsider HB12 and SB214 and work toward policies that support Maryland's hemp farmers and businesses without subjecting them to inappropriate oversight by the cannabis industry. Let's collaborate on regulations that protect public health, ensure product quality, and respect the distinct legal and economic status of hemp.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am happy to provide additional information or discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,
Dawn Furman Gordon

Owner Fingerboard Farm