



February 11, 2020

SB 604

Testimony from Olivia Naugle, Legislative Analyst, MPP, in support of SB 604

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Olivia Naugle and I am a legislative analyst for the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the largest marijuana policy reform organization in the United States. MPP has been working to improve marijuana policies for 25 years; as a national organization, we have expertise on the approaches taken by different states. MPP is also the convening organization of the Maryland Cannabis Policy Coalition, a diverse group of organizations that is working to advance and sensible humane marijuana policies.

I am here today in support of SB 604, which would require the Department of Education and the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Cannabis Commission to develop guidelines to allow the administration of medical cannabis to qualified patients during school hours and school-sponsored after school events.

This bill is important to registered pediatric medical cannabis patients and their caregivers throughout the state of Maryland. Policies are already in place that allow school nurses to administer other medicines that students need. Students who are registered medical cannabis patients also deserve access to their medicine.

Due to the fact that medical cannabis cannot currently be administered to registered patients on school grounds, patients must be checked out of school, have their medicine administered at another location, and check back in. The current process is burdensome and disruptive to both patients and their caregivers. Young patients and their families should not have to choose between their right to receive an education and their health.

Maryland has already recognized that medical cannabis is an effective medicine to treat a variety of serious medical conditions. There is no good reason that a pediatric medical cannabis patient should have their education disrupted to access the medicine that is critical to their wellbeing.

At least 10 states¹ with effective medical cannabis laws have enacted similar laws to SB 604 to ensure seriously ill children can use the medicine they need during school hours.

¹ The states we know of with similar laws are California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

In 2016, Delaware enacted “Rylie’s Law” in reference to a pediatric patient who uses cannabis oil to manage her seizures, but was legally unable to take her medicine at school until the law was enacted. Just last year, neighboring D.C. passed similar legislation. These compassionate laws for allowing safe access to medical cannabis while attending school are working well. Maryland should follow suit by enacting SB 604 / HB 617.

Thank you Chairman Pinsky and members of the committee for your time and attention. I respectfully urge a favorable report of SB 604. If you have any questions or need any additional information, I am happy to help and can be reached at the email or phone number below.

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