

Dear Delegates and Senators-

I want to supply my formal request for some commonsense regulation to be put in place regarding the growing hemp production business in the state of Maryland. There needs to be regulations put in place to protect the residents who live in the agricultural areas where hemp is being grown.

First, my wife and I are NOT against the growing of hemp or medical marijuana for that matter. This is a great move forward for the state of Maryland and long overdue. However, there needs to be some parameters around how closely hemp and potentially cannabis is grown to residential neighborhoods. We realize 2 miles is a lot to ask but there must be some way to find a realistic distance as to allow the hemp industry to continue to expand but also protect the rights of homeowners in the state. Especially in heavily populated residential areas that are zoned for a combination of agriculture and residential.

In our neighborhood we have fallen victim to several months of the horrid odor 24 hours a day seven days a week that the growing hemp product produces. It has infiltrated our homes, our cars, our clothes and made being outside unbearable during the most pleasurable months of the year (June-October).

However, this goes far beyond being a nuisance. This is a health concern for the residents, especially those with young children. There are medical studies about the effects of hemp and its impact on growing lungs and the elderly. We have twin boys who are only 8 years old and while both were born premature, one has sensitive lungs due to his premature birth and we are terrified the lasting impact this may be having on both of their lungs.

This program was a pilot program for a reason. In the end we do not know much about this plant. This is not the same hemp that was once legal many years ago. This is technologically advanced and even those workers treating the plants are required to wear protective clothing. There are numerous medical studies for and against the effects of inhaling the crop of hemp and/or cannabis. We do not want our eight-year-old twins to be a statistic a decade down the line when we realize that inhaling this pollution has long term ramifications. By not placing parameters around the growing product we are forced to either move and uproot our family or just hope for the best. How can you expect a parent to live like that?

We realize that in certain areas of Maryland you, as a homeowner, agree to live in an agricultural zone and agree to deal with the annoyance that some agricultural products present. However, that was before hemp was a legal agricultural product. Farmers want protection to grow whatever they want but at the same time they want the right to sell their land to builders, which is how my neighborhood originated.

You will hear today from several representatives from our area about the health concerns regarding the product. This should be enough to warrant a required proximity between homes and the product. We are not asking for the hemp program to be eliminated. Maryland is full of agricultural land that does not border homes or densely populated areas. There is no need for it to be placed in the middle of several neighborhoods. We fear that if you do not act now there is the potential that any farm can be leased to grow hemp. In our area you could theoretically be boxing in many neighborhoods with hemp producers.

In conclusion, we beg you to consider placing some regulation in order to protect this growing industry but also the citizens who pay to live here.

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