



February 24, 2020

Honorable Chairman Paul Pinsky  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: OPPOSITION TO SB 964 – Agriculture Hemp Prohibitions

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and committee members;

My name is Eric Steenstra and I am the president of Vote Hemp, the nation's leading non-profit advocacy group working to bring back hemp as a commercial crop for American farmers. I am also a Maryland resident. Today I write in strong opposition to SB 964 which would restrict farms within 2 miles of residential areas of 10 homes or more from growing hemp, a valuable agricultural crop.

The complaints that led to this bill have been due to a perception by some in the community that the smell of hemp terpenes are a nuisance. There are a number of things on farms that can produce characteristically offensive odors, including fertilizers, plants, compost and manure. The non-farming community views odors as strictly a nuisance. A farmer or food processor, however, sees odors as an unavoidable consequence of their livelihood.

Despite the fact that farm smells can be offensive and a perceived nuisance to some, agricultural organizations have the right to farm, including growing crops like hemp. According to § 5-403 of the Maryland Annotated Code, Maryland agricultural operations which have been underway for a year or more have the "right to farm". Farms are an important part of the fabric of our community and legislation banning "nuisance smells" would set a terrible precedent in Maryland and nationally.

Farms have often existed long before suburbia encroached on their land, just as the Piccinini & Sons farm has been. They are a fully legal licensed grower following all federal and state laws. Suburban residents who move into a neighborhood within several miles of a farm must understand that agricultural smells are something they must tolerate. It isn't fair or reasonable for them to move into the neighborhood and then expect to prohibit their long time farmer neighbors from making a living.

For this reason, we recommend that you OPPOSE SB 964.

Eric Steenstra

President  
Vote Hemp