

Testimony Regarding Hemp Bill

- My name is Daniel Altchek. I live in Lutherville-Timonium with my wife Jamie and our two young daughters, age 9 and 6.
- My family has lived in Lutherville-Timonium for nearly 5 years, after relocating to this area from New York City. My wife grew up nearby, off Dover Road, where her parents still live. We chose to move here to raise our children in a scenic and safe environment, with lots of outdoor space to play. We built our home on Sugarvale Way in 2016. As it turns out, our home is now roughly 1,000 feet away (perhaps less) from a farm that started growing industrial hemp in 2019.
- Like so many of my neighbors, my family has suffered as a result of the hemp farm. The stench coming from the hemp farm infested the neighborhood last summer. It seeped into our home even with all of the windows and doors sealed. The smell was so sickening that it prevented us – and our children -- from spending time outside (unless it was a lucky day with the wind blowing in the right direction). Our neighbors and their young children have suffered from headaches, nausea, eye and skin irritation, and various other health conditions. Anyone who attempts to minimize the impact of the hemp farm and its stench either did not spend time in the area or is being disingenuous.
- We are counting on our elected representatives to enact some basic protections for innocent homeowners. No one should have to endure what my family and our neighbors were forced to endure last year. We built a home on our property 5 years ago because this was a perfectly normal residential area. Any farming or other commercial activity that was going on in the vicinity did not affect anyone else living nearby. Then everything changed with the industrial hemp farm.
- People like us have invested their savings and built homes – and built their lives – with the reasonable expectation that a neighbor would not be permitted to engage in activity that makes them sick. Somehow the State allowed hemp farming to occur in residential areas without any meaningful understanding of potential health hazards and without any consideration of the horrible impact it would have on neighbors. There is now a chance for you to correct this dramatic oversight. Our elected representatives must do their job and pass legislation that requires hemp farming to occur outside of residential areas, far enough away that the homeowners who already live there can enjoy their homes without this sickening outside interference.

Daniel Altchek