

POSITION: SUPPORT HB 1369

Testimony of Lisa Ellis

Patient Advocate

SB 821 – Hearing – March 4, 2020

Chair Kelley and members of the Finance Committee,

Minority inclusion is still an issue. In 2018, you took legislative action to add four licenses with the goal of expanding minority participation. Two years later there are no new growers, the process is mired in litigation, and federal investigations.

The legislature MUST intervene this legislative session to add more licenses to ensure minority inclusion in the Maryland cannabis market.

This should be a priority because there is a shortage of cannabis flower.

Keeping prices high is driving people to the black market. Just check out Facebook and Instagram where you can routinely find high quality flower, cartridges, and edibles at a fraction of the dispensary price. These products are totally untested and almost certainly contaminated with pesticides and heavy metal not approved by our State.

Why is production such a problem? The growers promised no need for expansion. Why, because not all growers have been 100 percent successful at growing. Studies show one-third of all marijuana businesses fail. This may be one reason.

The other reason there is no motivation to maximize production. This keeps prices high and supply limited. This dilemma continues two years after legislative and even as the patient population is closing in on 100,000 certified Marylanders.

The proposed legislation would allow for expeditious application, approval, and preliminary licensing for Maryland-based growers and processors. This in turn will result in a faster addition of new growers in the supply chain to ease the flower shortage quickly, while creating an opportunity for minority ownership.