

Fighting for cannabis users,
growers, workers and their
families in the Free State.



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Statement by Kris Furnish, Executive Director, Maryland Marijuana Justice in support of HB1400

I'm here today in support of HB1400; Cannabis - Legalization, Taxation, and Regulation.

As we move closer to legalization, which I've mentioned before is inevitable, I cannot stress to you enough how important it is to include home cultivation to all Maryland residents over the age of 21. Home cultivation is sensible, reasonable, and our God given right as human beings. Creating a system that would provide every person equal access to cannabis if they need or desire it is the right thing to do. At MDMJ we stand up for those who live in poverty, those who are just a flat tire away from hitting rock bottom. People shouldn't have to choose between putting food on the table for their family and buying their medicine. To deny someone the right to cultivate a plant in the comfort and security of their own homes is an attack on one's personal liberty.

For me, I grow at home in Washington, DC, but I do not want to make a profit off it, rather supply my own needs. A home grow with only 6 plants would never be able to compete with industrial sized operations. Having home cultivation as an option, you will severely cripple the illicit marketplace because people would rather buy their cannabis in a legal dispensary, or grow it themselves. As a result, this would drastically reduce the illicit market value of the plant and in most cases would put many dealers out of business. Competing with home cultivation would also force businesses to keep the cost of retail cannabis low and the quality high in order to attract customers.

Some people need it more. When we look at necessity, premium cannabis can be very expensive, and if you're suffering from a condition where you find yourself needing to consume a substantially greater amount than an average consumer, buying your cannabis at a dispensary might be the worst option. People making RSO or extracts would never be able to achieve that buying from a dispensary. Patients have zero coverage. If someone is taking cannabis for cancer, the price is often too high. There is no drug plan or health insurance for them. We have no Compassionate Care Fund, so it is up to the dispensaries discretion whether they want to provide veterans and individuals on low income a small discount. If they could grow a few plants at home, then they would have better access to medicine, and they wouldn't have to worry about their cannabis being sprayed with dangerous chemicals that the state is allowing licensed grow ops to do now.

Give a person the right to grow, and you would essentially allow the person to grow their own medicine based on their need for the plant instead of exploiting it.

Finally, if you can brew beer at home and grow tobacco at home, why deny a cannabis user the right to grow in their homes? Why is it perfectly legal and socially acceptable to brew alcohol and grow tobacco? Studies from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcohol report that tobacco is the first leading preventable cause of death, alcohol is the third. Cannabis has caused zero deaths, yet lawmakers such as yourselves still treat it like it's going to destroy

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communities. Prohibition has destroyed communities. Some say if we allow home growing, nobody would be able to regulate the flow of 'where the cannabis is going', however the same arguments aren't made when talking about home breweries.

It isn't really legalization if you continue to criminalize people for having home gardens.

Growing cannabis at home does not pose a threat to public safety, but instead would ensure that customers can obtain safe and affordable cannabis. This is an issue of free markets as any regulatory mechanism that artificially restricts who can cultivate a plant necessarily limits who can participate in the market. A system such as this would undoubtedly favor the wealthy and well connected, as it already is. The same holds for regulatory systems that restrict individuals from growing cannabis while allowing businesses to. The social benefit is spending less on cannabis than they were in the black market. Home cultivation allows people to keep their money for more important expenses. The typical user is still spending around \$300 a month on cannabis. Home cultivation eliminates that for low income people. This is one of those situations where a politician can say they helped put money in your pocket.

There is no compelling government interest to prevent individuals from cultivating their own medicine. Instead, I believe the resistance from the General Assembly is based on sheer lack of knowledge and greed. I ask the members of the Maryland General Assembly to have more compassion when it comes to these issues. When we're talking about cannabis, we aren't talking about a cash crop. We are talking about plant medicine that has been used for thousands of years. A plant that is saving lives, young and old. Do not deny us our right to this medicine any longer.

Thank you for your time.

Kris Furnish, Maryland Marijuana Justice