

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION SB0708

March 4, 2021

My name is Vicky L. Orem. I am a lawyer, a judge, a public servant who has dedicated my life to serving the under privileged in my community. I have been a resident of Maryland for over 50 years. I am a two time applicant for a cannabis grow license. I have been fighting for inclusion in the legal marijuana industry since 2015. I have spent over \$800,000 fighting to participate in this industry.

I don't want a place at the table; I want to build my own table.

I don't want to serve the cannabis leaders in this industry with a job; I want to be a leader and create jobs of my own.

I don't want to work in their fields, I want to own my own fields.

I don't want you to attempt to fix the injustices of Maryland's cannabis laws with a pacifier.

I don't want the money of the cannabis leaders in Maryland. They have benefited from the unjust laws of this state which limits who participates in this lucrative market. This system of injustice and economic opportunity for a few and the privileged must stop.

As a law abiding, constitution upholding citizen of Maryland, I speak for myself and thousands of others, who will never participate in Maryland's legal marijuana program until they are allowed a fair opportunity to become business owners and share in the wealth of the marijuana industry. If you continue to tell us we cannot win at this game, we will create our own game.

Marijuana has been readily accessible in the United States for centuries, and the citizens of Maryland have had the privilege of access as well. As long as there is a system of Black and White opportunities in this state, the system of Black and White access to marijuana will continue. The underground access will thrive as long as the legal system of marijuana keeps opportunity for business limited to the privileged. People with ambition do not need permission, they find a means of participation.

This bill won't fix the injustice in the cannabis industry created by this legislature. This bill copies from Illinois Social Equity laws which are held to be the standard for social equity programs. The problem with the social equity programs has been infighting over the limited number of business permits. As a result entrance into the market for social equity applicants continue to be delayed due to numerous complaints about the process of awarding these social equity licenses.

I urge you to mirror Oklahoma's free market. Their laws are simple and focus on providing opportunities to its residents. Oklahoma's medical cannabis industry generated over 345 million in 2019, Maryland generated over 250 million. Both Oklahoma and Maryland have the same percentage of approximately 6% registered patients.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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