



**MARYLAND CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION  
MARYLAND SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION**



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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chairman and  
Members of the Finance Committee

**FROM:** Chief David Morris, Co-Chair, MCPA, Joint Legislative Committee  
Sheriff Darren Popkin, Co-Chair, MSA, Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

**DATE:** March 4, 2021

**RE:** **SB 708- Cannabis – Legalization and Regulation**

**POSITION:** OPPOSE

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) OPPOSE SB 708. These bills would legalize the use of cannabis in Maryland.

For years, we have told our young people, with good reason, that marijuana is a harmful and dangerous drug. Expecting our youth to understand the finer distinctions in this ongoing debate is unrealistic and conveys inconsistent and dangerous messages to them. MCPA and MSA are very concerned about the mixed signals this bill will send to our youth. By enacting this type of legislation, the State of Maryland will be giving authority for people to use marijuana should the voters support it. Our young people will not understand the finer nuances involved in the discussion involving marijuana and that of an illegal drug substance and one that is decriminalized. We believe they will simply hear that Maryland's legislators support the use of marijuana. This is inconsistent with the message that has been sent, and the one that should continue to be sent, to our children.

- The **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** believes that “[a]ny change in the legal status of marijuana, even if limited to adults, could affect the prevalence of use among adolescents.” While it supports scientific research on the possible medical use of cannabinoids as opposed to smoked marijuana, it opposes the legalization of marijuana.
- Marijuana is properly categorized as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act. According to the CSA, Marijuana is a Schedule I drug. Schedule I drugs have: 1) A high potential for abuse 2) No recognized medical use in treatment in the U.S. and 3) There is a lack of accepted safety protocols for use of the drug even under medical supervision.
- Marijuana is not as harmless as some would have you believe—it has serious physical and psychological side effects that can make marijuana very dangerous.

- Today's marijuana is not your father's marijuana: Over the last 20 years the potency of marijuana (as measured by THC content) has nearly tripled, from 3.7 percent to more than 10 percent. Some marijuana has been tested as containing more than 37 percent THC.
- The Supreme Court has repeatedly agreed that the scheduling of drugs, including marijuana, is the responsibility of the federal government. The process used by the federal government to schedule marijuana has been repeatedly reviewed and upheld by the courts.

Marijuana is the most commonly abused drug in the United States- nearly 98 million Americans over the age of 12 have tried marijuana at least once. According to the National Forensic Laboratory information system, Cannabis/THC has been for many years the most frequently identified drug item by far. The cost of liberalizing our drug laws is enormous, with incalculable long and short-term cost to both the users and our nation.

The Supreme Court in the past few years has reaffirmed DEA's authority to investigate the growing, selling, and possessing marijuana, irrespective of state law. Cases include *The United States v. Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative* (no exception for the distribution of marijuana on the basis of "medical necessity") and *Gonzales v. Raich* (reaffirmed DEA's ability to prohibit the intrastate and noncommercial manufacture and possession of marijuana for claimed medical purposes pursuant to state law).

DEA will continue to make major seizures of marijuana, and we are committed to enforcing the Controlled Substances Act in all states. As a matter of resource allocation, DEA focuses on criminal organizations, violent offenders, and serious drug traffickers, particularly illegal dispensaries and commercial operations that violate state and federal laws. For example 2010's *Project Deliverance* was the largest coordinated drug trafficking law enforcement operation along the Southwest Border in American history. Of the 74 tons of drugs seized, more than 69 tons were marijuana.

For these and other reasons, MCPA and MSA OPPOSE both SB 708 and urge an UNFAVORABLE committee report.