



February 16, 2021

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee  
Room 101, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**House Bill 32 - Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee members,

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC) is an advocacy organization that mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti-sex worker policies. As a certified Overdose Response Program, Naloxone distributor, and syringe service program, we have provided essential health care services across the state for years. To supplement the life-saving services provided by us and dozens of harm reduction programs across the state, BHRC supports House Bill 32 Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021).

The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation, Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021 proposes comprehensive legalization that would support community health and justice. This legislation would legalize personal possession and home cultivation of cannabis for adults, automatically expunge past cannabis offenses, establish a social equity program to ensure inclusion in the industry from disproportionately impacted communities, and reinvest a portion of tax revenue to communities hardest hit by the war on drugs.

**BHRC supports HB32 and broader efforts to gain community reparation from over a century of harm.** Over 145 years of criminalizing people - mostly Black people - who use drugs has devastated communities across the country. Maryland must prioritize the health, dignity, and safety of its residents, including systemic community healing after decades of over-policing and mass incarceration due to the war on drugs. We support the legalization efforts proposed in HB32 because it details steps toward repair from the violent drug war, including a Cannabis Regulation Fund that would support housing equity and voluntary substance use treatment.

The relationship between substance use, housing instability, incarceration, survival behavior, and racism are deeply intertwined. It is our Black community members who are most often subjected to this cycle of homelessness and incarceration, making up the majority of both homeless and incarcerated individuals in Maryland. Adding to this incredible injustice and experiences of marginalization is the increasingly deadly overdose epidemic. During the first nine months of 2020, as the deadly COVID-19 pandemic flooded the U.S. and Maryland, drug and alcohol related

intoxication deaths in Maryland reached a staggering 2,025 fatalities. Compared to the same period in 2019, overdose fatalities increased by over 35% among Black Marylanders.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of multiple intersecting public health crises, Marylanders deserve the modicum of relief that this bill provides by reducing policing, surveillance, and incarceration for cannabis possession. It is the least we can do to begin a path towards repair for unjust laws and community devastation -- waged in part by mass criminalization and the war on drugs. **We ask that the House Judiciary Committee give HB32 a favorable report.**

For more information about Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition or our position, please contact our Director of Mobilization, Rajani Gudlavalleti at [Rajani@BaltimoreHarmReduction.org](mailto:Rajani@BaltimoreHarmReduction.org)

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<sup>1</sup>Maryland Department of Health (Jan 2020). Unintentional Drug- and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths\* in Maryland Data update through 3rd quarter 2020.