



Voices Maryland

Committee: **Judiciary**

Testimony on: **HB0032-Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021)**

SPONSOR: Delegate Jazz Lewis

Organization: Voices Maryland,

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn, Legislative Exec

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of HB0032. Voices Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts marginalized communities and veterans affairs. Environmental legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historically and currently.

Why is Cannabis Inclusion, Restoration, & Rehabilitation Act 2021 Important?:

- **Taxing and regulating cannabis will create thousands of new jobs and bring in millions in tax revenue.**
- **Prosecuting and arresting cannabis offenders causes huge racial disparities in arrests which further marginalizes Marginalized communities.**
- **A portion of tax revenues from cannabis sales can be used for public education to combat any public issues such as driving under the influence, etc.**
- **Focus on reparative justice and inclusion for vulnerable and marginalized communities impacted with over criminalization.**

Summary: The cannabis industry in the United States is set to exceed \$24 billion in revenue by 2025 which will positively impact tourism, banking, food industries, real estate, construction, and transportation industries if legalized. Data shows that legalizing cannabis results in decreased teen use because it is now regulated and accessibility is altered in phasing out some of the organized crime and street market. In a study of Colorado and Washington state traffic deaths have dropped 11% that have legalized medical cannabis and arrests for driving under the influence have decreased overall. So the impact of driving under the influence may decrease overall.

Add the added impact of addressing the restorative justice to marginalized and low income communities that have been disproportionately impacted by being arrested for cannabis arrests and this bill will start the process of moving towards equity. We need justice. It's past time. We need to make this law and make it law now.

For these reasons and more, I urge a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB0032.

Respectfully submitted,

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(Dedicated to Black History Month)

"The time is always right to do what is right." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.