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MAYOR

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HB 32

February 17, 2021

TO: Members of the House Judiciary and Government Operations Committees

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: HB 32 - Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chairs Clippinger and Pendergrass, Vice Chairs Atterbeary and Peña Melnyk, and Members of the Committees, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 32.

HB 32 establishes a comprehensive, common sense, and equitable framework for cannabis legalization and regulation in Maryland.

In recognizing the disproportionate impacts the war on drugs has had on minority communities, the bill includes provisions to establish a social equity program. This program would ensure that those individuals that have been impacted by cannabis prohibition are afforded the opportunity to participate in the growing legal industry and that there is equity in enabling them to do so via licensing, technical assistance, and grant requirements.

These inclusion and equity provisions are paired with necessary criminal justice reforms that would help rectify or prevent injustices when legalizing cannabis. These include automatic expungement for those with cannabis records and release for incarcerated for cannabis possession; prohibiting parole, probation, and pretrial release from revocation for testing positive from legal cannabis use; and decriminalization/civil fines for violation of cannabis laws.

The bill also imposes state taxes and authorizes local jurisdictions to impose taxes on cannabis. Revenue generated each year from these taxes would be helpful for a number of local needs

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including improving our schools, addressing the opioid epidemic or other public health crises, and funding community-based public safety programs.

The BCA is committed to supporting the legalization of cannabis for adult recreational use in an equitable manner. Doing so will allow public safety officers to dedicate more time and resources to violent crime and rectify the social and economic impacts suffered by those impacted by cannabis prohibition.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 32.