



Testimony on HB32
Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. We strongly support HB32 because legalizing, taxing, and regulating cannabis would provide the State with immeasurable benefits to Marylanders across the State.

For 1199SEIU members, our mission has been to stand up for quality healthcare, good jobs, and social justice for all. We demand fair treatment for all persons, on and off the job, and this bill helps to ensure this goal. For many of our members who are minorities and live in majority-minority neighborhoods, the arrests of minorities for small level offenses due to cannabis possession have and continue to skyrocket. Healthcare workers themselves have even been unable to move up the career ladder due to convictions related to marijuana. To this extent, Blacks in Maryland are nearly three times as likely to be arrested or cited for cannabis possession compared to whites. Moreover, punishing cannabis possession through the criminal justice system also costs the state millions annually.

To alleviate this problem, this legislation provides expungement opportunities and releases for past cannabis offenses, which in practice, create some level of retribution for incarcerated citizens for crimes that were once deemed criminal. In tandem with expungement and release relief, the number of arrests for targeted minorities would significantly decrease for low-level cannabis offenses. This matters to our members because the arrests of minority community members not only provide a loss of family structure and income to minority families, but it consequently disrupts entire communities including businesses, jobs, and other socio-economic factors.

Uniquely, this legislation also allows for a health impact to take effect upon the bill's passing. This bill allows for recreational use of cannabis, as well as it gives the capability for adults who suffer from medical problems to use cannabis to treat various medical ailments that they may be something from. Equally as important, the tax revenue that is made by the business produced, would help our most marginalized residents in the State- including the youth and minorities. In practice, the tax made from cannabis sales would be directed and provide funding

for Maryland's HBCUs, as well as provide start-up funding and training for social equity businesses- particularly minority participation in the cannabis industry.

Given the criminal, violent, and racially biased history of cannabis use in this State and country- the legislature has an opportunity to pass this legislation to right many wrongs that have disproportionately affected Black and Brown communities. Given the far-reaching benefits of this bill, we urge a favorable report from the Committee on HB32.

Respectfully,

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