

House Judiciary Committee
HB 32 - Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and
Rehabilitation Act of 2021)
Position - Favorable

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

We write in strong support of the legalization and regulation of cannabis (HB 32).

Over 70% of Maryland's incarcerated population is Black, even though Maryland's Black population is only 30%. This racial disparity is only being exacerbated by Maryland continuing to arrest and convict residents for cannabis possession. Previously the Maryland General Assembly has passed legislation to decriminalize up to ten grams of cannabis, with the intended goal to lower the amount of cannabis convictions. Unfortunately this has not been the outcome, a study done in Baltimore City has found that residents are still being arrested at high rates for cannabis possession.

HB 32 will legalize cannabis possession for up to two ounces. This bill will also provide automatic expungement and release for residents convicted of possession and cultivation for up to two ounces. It also allows previously and currently convicted residents to petition for their record(s) to be expunged and/or be released from incarceration for other cannabis related offenses at no cost to the individual. This legislation also stops formerly incarcerated citizens from having their parole, probation, and pretrial services revoked by testing positive when drug tested for cannabis.

This bill also has a social equity program that allows residents who have been disproportionately affected by the "War on Drugs" to receive the necessary technical assistance and no-interest loans or grants to help pay for start-up costs entering the legal cannabis market. The social equity program will be a huge step in the right direction and will put Maryland on a path to increase the number of Black and Brown small business owners and lower the racial wealth gap.

We ask the committee for a favorable vote on HB 32 - Cannabis - Legalization and Regulation (Inclusion, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Act of 2021)

Thank you,

Carlos Childs
State Organizing Director
Our Revolution Maryland