



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of Senate Bill 692**

- **The Cannabis Legalization and Reparations for the War on
Drugs Act -
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On March 3, 2022.**

**Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the
Committee:**

I am proud to introduce Senate Bill 692, the Cannabis Legalization and Reparations for the War on Drugs Act. As the title of this legislation implies, the bill is designed to not only legalize the personal use of cannabis but also to help address some of the long-term, negative effects done to low-income communities and communities of color targeted by the failed campaign against drugs. Senate Bill 692 does so in a myriad ways, some of which I will touch on in my testimony.

Among other things, the bill establishes the amount of cannabis that an individual can possess legally to no more than four (4) ounces. Possession of more than four ounces will be punishable by a civil fine of up to \$150 or 15 hours of community service. Persons under the age of 21 who violate this provision will face a civil fine of up to \$50 and a court will provide the person with information relating to cannabis use disorder and the harms of underage cannabis use.

The bill also provides regulations for the cultivation of cannabis. For example, individuals are prohibited from growing more than six (6) plants in a residence, in public places or in areas accessible to persons under 21 years of age. The bill also prohibits law enforcement officers from solely basing reasonable suspicion or probable cause to search someone or a vehicle on the smell of cannabis. The bill vacates the convictions of those found guilty of cannabis possession, possession of cannabis paraphernalia, cannabis manufacturing, or cannabis distribution entered before July 1, 2022. And it affords individuals whose convictions sprung from cannabis-related searches, the right to petition the court for vacatur or a new trial.

To help address the harm done to certain communities targeted by the War on Drugs, the bill establishes The Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund. The fund will provide for economic reinvestment into impacted communities by allowing proceeds from the cannabis industry to be designated in ways that benefit minority-owned businesses. The Comptroller would have the power to prioritize the distribution of fund monies to those communities that have faced disproportionate criminalization for cannabis-related offenses.

Contrary to what some may believe, the data demonstrates that there is no connection between cannabis legalization and rising crime rates, and provides no evidence that cannabis legalization will result in an increase in auto accidents or fatalities. Legalization will, however, generate more tax revenue and create jobs. Senate Bill 692 is a continuation of this body's work because it recognizes that the War on Drugs has caused harm to marginalized communities that need healing.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 692. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "P" and "C".

Jill P. Carter