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Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger

Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee

6 Bladen Street, Room 101

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**House Bill 1325**

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams of District 22, and I will be testifying today in favor of **House Bill 1325**, also known as **Child in Need of Assistance - Neglect - Marijuana Use**. This legislation would change how marijuana use by parents is viewed during Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) proceedings. The use of marijuana by a parent will not serve as reason enough by itself to separate a child from his or her parent unless there were additional findings proving that the child is in danger.

This legislation comes at a time where attitudes towards marijuana use are shifting across the country. As of November 2021, 36 states allow marijuana use for medical purposes, 13 states have decriminalized possession, and 18 states have legalized recreational use for adults. Here in Maryland, the possession of small amounts of marijuana has been decriminalized, and a fully-fledged system has been developed to sell marijuana for medical use. We are, however, still a few steps away from full legalization as a State. As we have the conversation and pass legislation out of the House to move towards full legalization, we should also have a conversation about the impact that marijuana use plays in Child in Need of Assistance cases.

These lingering restrictions regarding marijuana possession and usage have, in the words of the American Medical Association, “disproportionately and adversely impacted marginalized and minority communities.” It is no secret that Black individuals face more severe repercussions

for marijuana possession and usage when compared to white individuals. This applies in legal proceedings as well, as in CINA cases handling neglect where marijuana is involved often cause irrevocable damage to the structure of a family.

Marijuana use alone is not sufficient enough of an indicator for how well an individual can parent a child. Using it as the basis for family separation only serves to cause further trauma and anxiety for both the parent and the child. This legislation will help to change the culture around marijuana, which is long overdue.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 1325.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole A. Williams, Esq." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.