



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**House Bill 0001 - Constitutional Amendment - Cannabis - Adult Use and Possession
Judiciary Committee – February 14, 2022
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning a priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0001 calling for a referendum on the legalization of cannabis use and possession for individuals 21 and older. We fully anticipate that the referendum will pass given that a February 2021 Goucher poll found that two-thirds of Maryland residents support legalization of recreational cannabis use.

Women are more likely than men to be incarcerated for a drug offense. Twenty-six percent of women in prison have been convicted of a drug offense, compared to 13% of men in prison. The proportion of imprisoned women convicted of a drug offense has increased from 12% in 1986 to 26% in 2018.¹

Our primary reasons for supporting the bill are the disproportionate impact of drug laws on people of color, the beneficial impact of cannabis use for some people, and the increased safety and increased revenue that comes from legalization.

1. Maryland cannabis laws have had a disproportionate impact on Black Marylanders

- A large number of marijuana possession charges are made as a result of traffic stops. Forty-one percent of all traffic stops in Maryland between 2016 and 2020 involved African-Americans who represent only 31% of the total population.
- According to "[A Tale of Two Countries](#)," a 2020 ACLU research report, even though Black people only represent 60% of Baltimore City's population, between 2018-2019, 96% of all marijuana possession charges were filed against Black people in the city.
- Women of color have been particular victims of current drug policy. "Drug use and drug selling occur at similar rates across racial and ethnic groups, yet black and Latina women are far more likely to be criminalized for drug law violations than white women. Black women are almost twice as likely – and Latinas are more than 20 percent as likely – to be incarcerated than white women."²

¹ "Incarcerated Women and Girls," The Sentencing Project, 2020 report

² "Women, Prison and the Drug War," Drug Policy Alliance, May 2018



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2. Legalization will allow Maryland to regulate and better control the strength and quality of cannabis.

- Regulation allows for control. Prohibition guarantees that cannabis will **not be** tested for purity and potency, creating the risk of contamination by dangerous pesticides, molds, bacteria, or even lacing.
- Maryland can benefit from the experience of **18 other states** that have already legalized recreational cannabis use, including seven in the past two years and two that have a decade's worth of experience with implementation and regulation.

3. Legalization will create new revenue streams for necessary public health initiatives and redress the inequities caused by the war on drugs.

- A 2022 report by the Marijuana Policy Project found that states that have legalized recreational cannabis use collected more than \$10 billion in cannabis tax revenue. This revenue can, and should be, directed toward social programs.

HB0001 allows the voting public of Maryland to decide whether to legalize cannabis for adult consumption. This is a truly democratic step forward and one that has the potential to begin to alleviate the societal damage caused by the "War on Drugs."

We commend the Democratic Party leadership in Maryland for stepping out in front to stop the biased effects of anti-cannabis legislation and bring equity in a new and growing industry.

We ask for your support for HB0001 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President