



Testimony on HB0001
Constitutional Amendment - Cannabis - Adult Use and Possession
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 HB0001 because it puts the issue of decriminalizing cannabis on the ballot. Once on the ballot, citizens can vote to decriminalize cannabis possession, which would reduce Maryland's prison population and save the government money, which could be put towards other programs.

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 alleviate this problem, if this amendment passes it could provide a path for expungement opportunities and releases for past cannabis offenses, which in practice, could create some level of retribution for incarcerated citizens. In tandem with expungement and release relief, the number of arrests for targeted minorities would significantly decrease for low-level cannabis offenses, by which many minorities are often targeted. 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.

In addition, by allowing cannabis to become legalized, the State would also create an additional revenue source that could fund many state programs and policies. For our members, the possible benefits of this bill far outweigh any conflicts that could arise from legalizing cannabis and therefore, urge a favorable report from the Committee on HB0001.

Respectfully,

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