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## Statement of Support: House Bill 556

**To: Economic Matters Committee**

**From: Eric Blitz, Chair, Libertarian Party of Maryland**

February 15, 2023

Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, Members of the Committee:

The Libertarian Party of Maryland supports passage of HB 556, with the amendments suggested below.

As you may know, the Libertarian Party has called for the legalization of cannabis since 1972 and we are appreciative that the end of the failed prohibition policies will soon be realized in Maryland.

We would strongly recommend two amendments.

In this bill the consumer sales and use tax is set at 6% in 2024, matching the standard sales and use tax, but that rate increases by an additional 1% for 4 consecutive years to maximum of 10% in 2028 thereafter. We greatly appreciate that the tax rate is set low enough in the beginning to help displace criminal markets, which should be the ultimate goal of ending prohibition. However, we believe that the sales tax of cannabis should be no different than other products and should match the general sales tax that I currently at 6%. We would ask the bill be amended to have the general sales and use tax applicable in the state apply to consumers of cannabis.

Echoing the concerns of Maryland NORML, we are concerned that the right of consumers be able to grow their own cannabis plants for personal/family use and believe the number of plants that can be grown for personal use should be no different for general consumers than medical cannabis patients. We believe the plant limit should be at least 6 plants, with up to 2 seedlings not counting towards the 6-plant limit.

Special interests should not be allowed to structure the legalization law to prevent consumers who wish to grow their own plants. "Home grow" is no different than the right to brew your own beer. So long as it is for personal use and not for sale, the right to grow your own cannabis allows consumers who wish to experiment with growth strategies, strains, or for general hobbyist goals.

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Maryland, I ask the committee for a favorable report on HB 556, with amendments.

Sincerely,

/s

Eric Blitz, Chair  
Libertarian Party of Maryland