

Hallaway LLC, dba Star Buds
5975 Belair Rd
Baltimore MD 21202

Feb 15, 2023

To: Economic Matters Committee – State of Maryland

RE: House Bill 556 -Cannabis Reform

Dear Members of Economic Matters Committee and Chair Delegate C.T. Wilson:

My name is Carissa Cartalemi, I am the Founding Treasurer of the MD Medical Dispensary Association and Owner/Operator of Star Buds, a licensed medical cannabis dispensary operating at 5975 Belair Rd in Baltimore city for the last 5 years and looking to convert to adult use & medical licenses in July. I am writing to you today to ask you to **support with amendments House Bill 556, Cannabis Reform**

Amendments needed to this bill include:

1. Micro Dispensaries –

- a. **Change wording from micro dispensary license to delivery license** as this clearly states the intended nature of the license. Otherwise, businesses will take advantage of this language and you are likely to see “ice cream truck” style delivery or “pop-up event” style dispensaries operating without the proper safety and security procedures. *All licenses should be required to have the same safety and security procedures as existing medical licenses.*
 - b. **Capping the # of proposed micro dispensary licenses to 50** – Dispensaries including mine are already operating delivery from our store fronts and are working with existing delivery businesses for medical use, so we do not need as many micro dispensaries as have been proposed for delivery purposes. Since these licenses will be able to transfer to a standard license, keeping that number at 50 leaves room in the license cap for these micro licenses to become a standard dispensary license once they’ve been successfully operating a micro license.
 - c. **Add language to include the 50 micro dispensary (delivery) licenses in the 300 dispensaries license cap.** Since these micro dispensaries will be able to convert to a standard license after they’ve been operational, they must be considered in the overall license cap in the legislation.
- 2. Delivery for current license holders** – Please add language that current license holders are grandfathered into delivery, as many of us have already put countless time, money, and resources into offering delivery from out storefronts. The current bill does not allow for this.
- 3. Consumptions Lounges –**
- a. **Strike language that disallows dispensary owners from operating consumption lounges.** Dispensary operated consumption lounges are the safest option thru which to

introduce adult-use cannabis to the general population. Yes, cannabis is an extremely benign drug compared to other pharmaceutical or illicit drugs that may cause death when over-consumed. However, it is still a mind-altering substance that is being made available for the first time and it does require a lot of care and knowledge when dispensing cannabis for public consumption.

- b. **Allowing current dispensaries to operate consumption lounges is the safest way to introduce consumption lounges** as we have knowledge of the safety and security procedures needed, as well as a team of dispensary agents with 5 years of experience dispensing cannabis.
- c. **Disallow food establishments from operating consumption lounges** - Food establishments are not equipped with the high security needs for dispensing cannabis nor are their staff equipped to safely dispense this mind-altering substance to adults 21 & over. Over consumption of edibles can be extremely uncomfortable and in extreme cases may cause psychosis.

4. Conversion Fee –

- a. **Lower the conversion fee for independent dispensaries by half.** The current fee schedule only hurts Independent Dispensaries operators like myself. If we're able, medical dispensaries are making major investments getting prepared to serve adults 21 & over. Adding an additional large fee as is proposed means many independent operators may not be able to convert to adult use even if they want to.
- b. **Allow conversion fee to be paid in installments.** This will help independent operators to convert to Adult Use licenses if that's part of the business plan.

Thank you for your time on this matter. If you would like to discuss this with me further, I can be reached at carissa@starbuds.us or 914-589-6566.

Sincerely,

Carissa Cartalemi
Owner Operator
Star Buds Baltimore