



Metro Washington Labor Council, AFL-CIO

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An AFL-CIO "Union City"

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Chair C.T Wilson
Economic Matters Committee
Room 231
House Office Building
Annapolis Maryland, 21401

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, and the 150,000 members we serve throughout the Metro Washington area, I am testifying favorably with amendments to House Bill 556 - The Cannabis Reform.

When Maryland started addressing the use of Cannabis, I was the Political Director for UFCW Local 400. Since that time, this state has legalized the use of Cannabis for both medicinal and recreational purposes.

The Maryland General Assembly has taken thoughtful steps when researching and crafting legislation to close the divide between communities of color and the industry. As the daughter, mother, aunt, and grandmother of black children, especially men, I am happy to see legislation that undoubtedly creates a pathway for people of color (POC) to access the wealth many of us have too long been denied.

However, we know that via this legislation that licensing is limited. In addition, to limited licensing rollout, the general assembly must address the express barriers for people of color to own and have access to capital. Federal and state legislation needs to be changed for POCs to access business start-up loans. Until we remove these barriers of entry to an industry that relies on cash that only traditionally white entrepreneurs have immediate access to, we still come up short.

Furthermore, we all understand that there will be entrepreneurs and workers in a free market. If the state plans to invest in ownership, we need to make sure the companies have the same commitment to train, pay and create wealth opportunities for their workers.

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Cannabis is a multi-billion dollar industry that creates jobs in several sectors, such as security, agriculture, retail, and beyond. With LPAs, we, as Marylanders, can allow workers to be represented and discuss cases of egregious worker exploitation due to organizing.

We know that when this body ensured Labor Neutrality in Gaming legislation, workers were guaranteed quality wages, benefits of a union, job training, and other fringe benefits that continue to help grow America's middle class and not shrink it.

Now we have that same chance to provide workers in the Cannabis industry with the same benefits. The government, the business community, and labor have formed great partnerships in the past to create a better Maryland. So, We should do so again by including Labor Peace in House Bill 0556.

I look forward to working with this committee and other stakeholders to pass this legislation with amendments. Thank you for your time and consideration.