

Hello, my name is Kyle Mourick, and I am a Cannabis advocate, patient, industry worker and future small canna-business owner. I have been an advocate and user of cannabis since I was a teenager and dreamed of the day the unjust war on cannabis would end, however I did not think it would have been so poorly executed. After many years of waiting for the passed legislation to come to fruition, we were offered medical cannabis. Those licenses were supposed to be held by Marylanders, specifically not MSO's, yet today the vast majority are large, corporate MSO's, and no small business. What I am looking for out of the recreational legislation is a drastic change to this industry and who is allowed to participate in it.

We NEED small business in cannabis. The "BIG Cannabis" MSO model has destroyed the industry in my opinion. Crops are grown based solely off the percentage and high yields at most of these facilities and the consumer is the one paying the price. The quality of the products in most dispensaries is laughable to most veteran growers/smokers/advocates. Which is why there is still such a large illicit market. A vast majority of cannabis users will not purchase from dispensaries because the product is more expensive and of lesser quality than they can obtain from the unlicensed market. The only way to avoid an illicit market is to allow those unlicensed providers to become licensed and legal. The most qualified people to grow cannabis are the ones that have been doing it most their lives, regardless of its legality, because they are passionate about the plant. Instead, those people are offered a barely living wage from these MSO producers, while their investors pocket all the profits. If we do not allow small batch craft cannabis into the recreational market the illicit/unlicensed market will continue to thrive, regardless of people having a legal place to purchase. We will also lose less sales to DC, as that has become the source of high-quality cannabis for many Marylanders.

It doesn't take millions of dollars to grow high quality cannabis. In fact, some of the best cannabis I've ever come across came from home growers. It's not hard to figure out why though, they are more concerned with quality than yield or having a celebrity name to market their product. So why has the financial requirements for this industry been set so high? To gatekeep? The cost, and availability, of the medical license's basically ensured it would only be available to the wealthy and connected. I recommend a tiered license system like Michigan has employed. They offer a class A,B, and C grow license for how many plants you can grow as well as a micro grow license aimed at small business that allows that company to grow, process and sell their product from a store front. All that should be required is that the cannabis is tested and deemed a safe product for consumption. The financial requirements to apply

that existed for medical should be removed or amended as they further discourage and inhibit a small company from entering the market. We made many mistakes implementing medical cannabis and we are being afforded the opportunity to fix them now.

If you ask a veteran cannabis user or advocate what they think of our current medical cannabis program, most will tell you it's laughable. The subpar quality of products matched with higher prices, drive most consumers to the unlicensed market. If we want to get rid of the illicit market the only way is to allow them a way into the legal, licensed market. This will also force the current MSO license holders to either start producing higher quality products or leave the market, like we have seen recently in California, Washington and Colorado. The best analogy I've been able to come up with is this; Our current market is mostly Budweiser and Coors while many of our cannabis users prefer something like Flying Dog or Union Craft Brewing. A huge, if not the largest, part of our industry is not represented in our legal market. This forces those consumers to the unlicensed market to find a product they like at an affordable price. If the goal of the state is to get rid of the illicit market as they have stated, then they MUST allow more "craft" companies. What that looks like is allowing those that are truly passionate about the plant to get licensed. The people, like myself, that have been growing and processing for years. Those that, like myself, left their home state and all their family and friends in order to be able to grow legally. Those, like myself, that had to open their business in another state, because their home state still didn't allow home grow or small business. These are the people that should be at the top of this industry, instead of barely making a living wage; working for an MSO that cares more about paying its investors than its employees. Companies that care more about marketing and collaborations with celebrities to try and sell their subpar product are not what we deserve, but it's what we've been given, and we are supposed to be grateful?

We haven't even been able to produce our own cannabis until this recreational bill came about. And what is now being offered us as home grow is not sustainable. As it stands now, we are being offered 2-4 plants for home grow. That is simply not enough to provide oneself with enough cannabis to sustain them. It takes a minimum of 4 months from seed to harvest for a [plant to grow, mature and flower. Considering that most growers (especially inexperienced) will only yield an ounce or two of smokable flower per plant it is just simply not enough. Again, I advise at following Michigan's rules for growing, 12 plants per person and if there is more than one consumer in the home, they can have separate, 12 plant grows. I know the concern is that

people are going to try and become Pablo Escobar but that's simply not the case. The truth is growing is hard and tedious and a lot of the time doesn't come out well. But people should be able to decide that themselves. There's no difference between me brewing a keg worth of home brew and growing 12 plants for personal use. And if there is still concern of illicit drug sales, that's what we have a police force for. We can't disallow home grow just out of fear some people may sell a small amount of cannabis illegally, that's absurd, there's already laws in place against it. But if you allow for those who wish to grow cannabis commercially, a means to do so, you eliminate that illicit market while also bringing taxable revenue to the state. Otherwise, those individuals will continue to operate outside the law.

The final piece I want to add to this testimony is in reference to the social equity piece of the bill. While I am in full support of diversifying our current cannabis market, I believe it should be expanded to include those who have been arrested for minor cannabis offenses. I'm less concerned of someone's skin color, as to their ability to cultivate cannabis when it comes to licensing. Once again, I refer you to Michigan's social equity plan. It includes minorities, woman and those who have been arrested for cannabis in the past. The people pioneering this industry have been doing so illegally, unjustly for decades. They should be the ones allowed the first chance to legally enter a market that never should have been illegal in the first place. I thank you all for your time and consideration and offer my skills and knowledge to you to help make Maryland's recreational cannabis market the standard for the nation.

Maryland NORML is requesting the following last-minute amendments to further reduce avoidable police encounters and criminal prosecution:

1. Align medical and adult-use cannabis possession and home cultivation protections. A two-tiered system increases enforcement complexity and disparate treatment. A uniform standard is easier for everyone involved.
2. Clarify that employees cannot be fired solely for testing positive.
3. Eliminate the illicit market by giving small cultivators access to a business license, not jail time. Cottage industry production is an American tradition - to convert our home, our land, into supplemental income for ourselves and our family. Jurisdictions should have authority to license small producers who would then have their cannabis tested, processed, and sold in the legal state-licensed cannabis supply chain.

