



February 15, 2023

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to express our unfavorable position on HB556.

As an equity-focused organization, Uplift Action Fund, Inc. (UAF), believes that legalizing adult-use cannabis is a crucial step towards restorative justice, and we appreciate the intent of HB556 to make our legalized cannabis industry fair and equitable. However, we believe that placing cannabis under the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission to oversee the implementation of the regulated cannabis industry is problematic.

Our opposition to this legislation solely stems from our concerns that the commission is run by law enforcement, who have been responsible for generations of subjective policing, which in turn have disproportionately impacted our communities. We believe that this commission is not the appropriate body to oversee a regulated cannabis industry and that the voices of those most impacted by the war on drugs are not adequately represented in that decision.

We urge the committee to reconsider the proposed commission and to consult with community leaders and impacted individuals to develop a more equitable solution for enforcement. We stand ready to work with you to achieve an equitable solution that empowers the communities that have been most impacted by the war on drugs.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this important issue.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Ford, Jr.".

Kevin Ford, Jr.
Executive Director
Uplift Action Fund, Inc.



2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

DAY 1 EQUITY

Equal Opportunities for All Marylanders + Equitable Resources for Qualified Equity Applicants

INDEPENDENT REGULATION

Fully fund standalone Maryland Cannabis Commission to regulate cannabis (medical and adult-use) and hemp

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

End subjective policing on disproportionately impacted communities, and replace with common sense enforcement

APPROPRIATION OF CANNABIS TAXES

Ensure revenue generated from the legal cannabis industry helps to address past harms of criminalization

PUBLIC HEALTH + SAFETY

Educate and train our communities in order to promote entrepreneurship, employment and responsible consumption