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Written Testimony Related to HB0556 Cannabis Reform

I am a healthcare professional based in District 11, working within the cannabis space writing to express my concern for the patients I serve. My clinical pharmacy experience began in a rehab hospital before transitioning into Maryland medical cannabis, where I've seen a profound influence in a patient's healing with the use of this plant since 2018.

As Maryland legislators review and negotiate the terms of SB0516/HB0556 for the implementation of the adult-use cannabis program, alongside our existing medical program, it is imperative that access to guidance by qualified healthcare professionals remains available to those utilizing cannabis for medicinal purposes and to new consumers, alike.

Among my colleagues, there is a growing concern that access to these services may dissipate if not considered in the development of the adult use program or a dual medical and adult use program. Medical Professionals such as Pharmacists, Doctors, and Nurses need to be an integral part of the continuation of patient care up to and after any adult-use legislation is enacted. Most cannabis patients and adult use consumers continue to need education in expected outcomes, side effects, pharmaceutical interactions, and instruction on utilizing this natural herb, with many formulations being highly psychoactive. New users, both medical and adult-use, are the most prone to accidental misuse from lack of or improper education. It is clear to see from working on the ground level that leading up to the point-of-sale is the critical window to impart proper wisdom upon patients and new consumers. Maintaining the professional presence is of the utmost importance.

We support SB/HB with the following considerations:

- Enforce and extend the regulatory role of “Clinical Director” to all dispensary types to mitigate unnecessary healthcare expenditures related to emergency room visits and adverse events.
- Uphold regulation related to the reporting of adverse events and recalls as this is imperative to consumer safety and harm reduction.
- Require all license types to produce/offer a minimum of non-smokable and low or non-impairing cannabis, and cannabis products to sustain the current medical availability and offer less-intoxicating options for new consumers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Alexander Dix, PharmD