



February 15, 2023

Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair  
Economic Matters Committee:  
131 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD. 21401

**Re: HB556-Cannabis Reform**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

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

My name is Hope Wiseman, and I am the founder and CEO of Mary & Main, a medical dispensary located in Prince George's County., where I was born and raised. We opened our doors almost 5 years ago and have since been able to safely serve our community through our work. I am proud to say that Mary & Main is 100% African American, Women, Disabled Veteran owned, and was founded alongside my mother, Dr. Octavia Wiseman, a local dentist and entrepreneur dedicated to serving her community through healthcare and financial empowerment. I am here today to voice my support for HB556 and request a favorable report with amendments.

Firstly, I want to emphasize the importance of individuals like myself in the industry. The emergence of the legal cannabis industry has created a much-needed wealth building opportunity for black and minority entrepreneurs who have been traditionally left out of participating in emerging industries such as technology, gaming, and renewable energy, just to mention a few. It is essential that we ensure that these opportunities for wealth creation are accessible to everyone, especially demographics who have been most impacted by prohibition efforts.



I commend the legislators for listening to industry stakeholders and making a conscious effort to ensure equity throughout the legislation. Specifically, I appreciate the low tax rate and the detailed effort towards ensuring that tax revenue is allocated to the most disenfranchised communities and organizations that are already doing the work. This is a critical step towards creating a more equitable industry.

Moreover, I want to commend the effort to support social equity through the creation of the Office of Social Equity. The Office will provide businesses with funding and technical assistance programming, critical in ensuring that all businesses, regardless of their size, have an opportunity to succeed in this industry.

### **Bill Concerns**

However, I am concerned about the limitations of the current legislation when it comes to scaling a business. One of the newly elected governor Wes Moore's campaign promises was to create "A Bold Plan to Unlock Economic Opportunity for Maryland's Black Families," and I firmly believe that the cannabis industry is a key part of that opportunity.

One of the reasons I pursued this industry was to build wealth for my family and pave the way for others to do the same. Unfortunately, the current legislation does not allow for companies to scale their businesses to reach heights of wealth creation, and it could breed a market of licensees unable to compete with the current national players.

If Maryland wants to see true Black and minority wealth creation, legislation must provide a pathway for this to exist. A thriving cannabis industry in Maryland can be a key driver of economic growth in black communities, and it is imperative that we create an environment where businesses can compete on a national scale.



In closing, I want to thank the Committee for its efforts so far and for having the spirit of equity in mind. I am aligned with this vision and want to work with you to achieve our shared goals. However, I urge the committee to consider the limitations of the current legislation and to work towards creating a more expansive and inclusive industry that allows for wealth creation for black entrepreneurs specifically. I offer myself and my experience to all members of the General Assembly as we tackle this momentous legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hope Wiseman