

Maryland Senate Finance Committee

RE: Senate Bill #516, Testimony 3/9/23

Good afternoon committee members. My name is **Chris Batten**. I would like to thank the committee for considering my testimony on SB516.

My request, on behalf of 5 generations of my family, is simple: Please do not pass legislation that could DESTROY our family farm. SB516 as written could very well do that by changing the rules upon which we have invested heavily over the past 4 years. To be clear, we do not oppose the entire bill and in fact do support the measures that would restrict the sales of CBD delta 8.

I am manager of this 100-acre farm near Taneytown which my family has owned and farmed for more than 75 years. When the United States Congress passed the farm bill in 2018 and made hemp LEGAL, my family like many others in the farming community saw an opportunity to earn badly needed income by producing LEGAL, ORGANIC, CBD products. We invested enormously—borrowing and taking from our retirement funds for expensive equipment, structures, supplies, labor and marketing.

Our business has survived and is growing due to the fact that we grow, process, market and sell our products direct at Farm Markets and on line. We have many regular customers who benefit from CBD for pain relief, improved sleep and reduced anxiety for themselves and/or pets. Several customers have commented that they prefer CBD to THC because they do not like the psychotropic effect of THC. **We do not sell Delta (8) versions of hemp and have no intention to do so.**

Our farm is organically certified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and we are committed to providing healthy natural products. For the past four years we have purchased permits from MDA and conformed to all regulations including federal limits on THC.

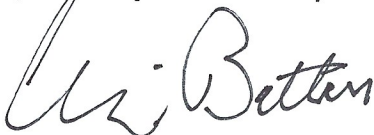
The legislation as proposed (Senate Bill 516, Section 36-1103(A)) would impose burdens and expenses that will make it IMPOSSIBLE for us to stay in business. The limit on THC as specified in this law goes way beyond the federal limit **upon which we built our business**. This law would make nearly all of our products **ILLEGAL**, thereby virtually destroying our family business. The large product inventory we have built over 4 years, and all the significant investments in the structures and equipment, and marketing—not to mention the sweat equity from us aging farmers--would be flushed down the toilet.

However....An amendment as proposed by Barry Prichard of Sun X Analytical seems like a reasonable way to satisfy the intent of the legislation without destroying businesses like ours.

I am no lawyer, but I think I understand what Ex Post Facto means. The US Constitution prohibits Ex Post Facto laws. If this law is passed as currently written, it will make much of what we have already produced **LEGALLY**, in accordance with present Maryland laws, suddenly become **ILLEGAL**—potentially making my family criminals under the new law.

Please remove section 36-1103(A) from Senate bill 516 or change the language in the section from 0.5 milligrams of Tetrahydrocannabinol per serving to 3 milligrams and 2.5 milligrams of Tetrahydrocannabinol per package to 90 milligrams. Let my family go on farming **LEGALLY**, to continue bringing clean Maryland farm products and food to Americans for another 5 generations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Batten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Batten, Partner

Fiddlers Green Farm LLC