

Testimony 3/9/23
Senate Bill #516

Hello committee members. Thanks for taking the time to read my testimony for SB516. My name is Benjamin Batten and I have been running my family's farming operation since 2019. I chose to revitalize our 5th generation family farm to return control of the fields to our family and create a more robust local supply chain for our community.

Our farm, Fiddlers Green Farm, has been running an honest, responsible hemp-derived CBD business since the 2018 Farm Bill. We grow the hemp organically, contract out the extraction process to a reputable Maryland business, and sell our products direct to our community at farmers markets. We have invested heavily in time and money to reach the point where we are almost breaking even financially. We have worked very hard to earn the trust of our customers and change the stigma around the hemp industry. We are very close to becoming a successful Maryland farm that does not depend on government subsidies.

As currently written, this bill will significantly restrict the types of hemp-derived products that one can produce and sell in Maryland, which will crush our business. I support the legislature's effort to restrict products that it perceives as intoxicating. I do not support Delta 8 products in any way and we have refused to manufacture them from the beginning because it does not align with our mission. I do not support the adoption of the THC limits to naturally-occurring hemp-derived products detailed in Section 36-1103, Page 69, Line 23-29. These limits are in clear contradiction to the Federal standards as outlined in the 2018 Farm Bill, limits we have built our business around for 4 years.

Plainly put, these limits seem to favor the large corporate interests of out of state companies looking to gain control of the entire cannabis market. It also seems as this legislation has moved extremely quickly to give very little time for opposition. This current language will kill our small business and other similar Maryland businesses that don't wish to compete with the recreational THC industry.

I will support SB516 with a change in the language to raise the limits to reflect the Federal THC threshold of 3mg THC per hemp-derived CBD per serving and 90mg per package.

Thank you for the consideration of our proposed amendments and look forward to your support of the industrial hemp industry in Maryland.

Regards,

Benjamin Batten
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