



Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building,
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, Maryland

Re: SB516-Cannabis Reform
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Griffith 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 District 25 of Prince George's County, where I was born and raised. We are one of the only black owned businesses in Maryland's cannabis industry and I have been recognized as the youngest black woman to own a dispensary in the United States. 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 especially excited about the growth of the industry since we began our journey and am happy to support the bill and give my recommendation as favorable 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.

That being said, I am a member of the Maryland Black Operators Alliance and we have proposed a list of amendments and suggested language that supports the growth of minority owned businesses in Maryland (please see attached).

Micro-dispensaries

I have concerns and a number of questions related to the micro-dispensary licenses. While we understand that, as defined, they will not have a physical space (non-storefront), will they be allowed to have warehouse/storage space? If so, this would make it very hard for any of the small, brick and mortar dispensaries—converted or new standard licenses— to compete. Are they able to use independent contractors, over and above the ten-employee limit? Are there limitations on the amount of product



any vehicle can carry at one time? Are they allowed to deliver cannabis 24/7 and can they deliver statewide? Will they be able to sell at pop up events that are broken down at the end of the night? We believe more thought should be given to these and other issues prior to awarding this particular licensing category. Therefore, we would request the General Assembly consider a pilot program with a much smaller number of licenses prior to issuing these micro-dispensary licenses.

Delivery

Currently licensed dispensaries are allowed to deliver medical cannabis. While all of them do not deliver, some do, and they do so safely. We would request that all converted dispensaries be allowed to continue delivery.

Advertising

We would request simply carrying over the advertising requirements from the medical program, adjusting them to accommodate the adult use program.

Home Grow

Since SB 516 allows home grow, we request language be added to the bill allowing dispensaries to sell seeds, clones and cuttings. Patients and consumers are used to purchasing products from dispensaries, so we believe allowing this makes sense.

Onsite Consumption Lounges—Licenses

As drafted, Senate Bill 516 allows onsite consumption lounges to sell cannabis products. This further adds to the number of retail licenses/retail locations in Maryland. This should be taken into consideration as you deliberate on overall dispensary license caps. With that, we have two requests with regard to consumption lounges:

Current dispensaries should be eligible to apply for an onsite consumption lounge. Currently, they are prohibited from doing so in SB 516. Dispensaries already have experience with cannabis products, and already have an understanding about how to



safely store, handle and sell products and already have staff trained to recognize and handle intoxication and substance use disorders.

In addition, the bill allows local jurisdictions the ability to ban smoking and vaping at onsite consumption lounges. Many people, especially renters, are not allowed to smoke or vape in their place of residence. Onsite consumption, lounges, then, provide for them a place to do that. We would respectfully request this language be amended out of the bill.

In closing, I want to thank the General Assembly 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.

Kindly,

Hope Wiseman

Founder/CEO, Mary and Main

Maryland Black Operators Alliance (member)

Maryland Medical Dispensary Association (policy committee)

