



February 16, 2023

**HB556/SB516 – Cannabis Reform
Letter Of Information
Economic Matters Committee 2/17
Finance Committee 3/9**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST is one of the fifty statewide networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as Maryland's affiliate to the National Afterschool Association.

MENTOR Maryland | DC is the statewide affiliate of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership in Maryland. Our shared mission is to increase both the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships. This is accomplished through support to on-the-ground mentoring programs to improve their quality, effectiveness, and scale while coalescing stakeholders to expand engagement and investment locally.

With the legalization of recreational marijuana in Maryland, we have an even greater urgency to expand access to positive youth development opportunities. The same communities that have been deeply impacted by the war on drugs also frequently have an insufficient investment in programs for young people of all ages. In addition, these communities are home to smaller nonprofits that provide essential youth services but have been historically excluded from funding both government and private philanthropic funding sources. The Cannabis Reinvestment & Repair Fund could offer a meaningful boost to targeted communities.

Research indicates that afterschool, summer, and mentoring programs support healthy decision-making. Young people who have opportunities to attend high-quality youth development programs are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue secondary education, and are less likely to be both victims and perpetrators of crimes. Young people who experience programs that open windows and doors to new experiences are more likely to plan for the future and have a sense of agency. These protective factors mitigate risk-taking and make it less likely for young people to engage in underage alcohol or drug use.

As the legislature begins to design the Community Reinvestment & Repair Fund, we encourage you to review successful examples from other states. Included with this Letter of Information is an overview from the Afterschool Alliance, providing brief overviews from across the country. One particular highlight is from Illinois:



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Illinois Governor JB Pritzker signed the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (HB1438) into law on June 25, 2019. This law not only legalized adult-use cannabis, but it also created the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) program. Under this program, Illinois directs funding to areas with high rates of economic disinvestment, gun violence, unemployment, child poverty, and incarceration. The program requires that grantees use the funding to support civil legal aid, economic development, reentry, violence prevention, and/or youth development. Through 2020, the R3 board met to designate areas of need in Illinois and design a grant program to serve these target areas.

In January 2021, Illinois announced its first round of R3 grants. Roughly 400 programs applied for funding. Only 80 programs received grants, and more than half of these fund youth development programs. The overwhelming number of applications for this funding underscores the need in these communities.

We also encourage the legislature to consider adding a representative with youth development expertise to the Advisory Board on Medical and Adult Use Cannabis to provide additional perspectives on strategies and programs to mitigate juvenile cannabis usage post-legalization.

MOST and MENTOR Maryland | DC can serve as a connection point for additional information about the approaches taken in other states. **Maryland continues to fall in the bottom ten states in our access to afterschool programs. We can do better for young people, support healthy decision-making, and bolster positive outcomes using the revenue from legalized Cannabis.**

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